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T. Thistlethwayte Esqre

Southmill Park. 1850,

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COUNTRY QUARTERS;

A NOVEL.

BY

THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON,

WITH A MEMOIR

BY HER NIECE, MISS POWER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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COUNTRY QUARTERS.

CHAPTER I.

Lady Travers had not long been a wife when she began to find out that the menaced punishment said to be allotted to old maids in another world could hardly be worse than the actual one she had entailed on herself in this. To lead apes in a place "not to be named to ears polite" appeared to her preferable to leading fools on earth, and there were moments when she was disposed to repent not having waited to try the experiment. Of all fools, a vain and pompous one is the most difficult to manage and disagreeable to live with. The two ideas of Sir Henry Travers were, his own personal im-

portance, and the grandeur and antiquity of his family. He could think of, speak of, nothing else, and was never tired of these subjects. His marriage he looked on as a new branch to the genealogical tree, which would tell well, and prove that *he* had not formed a *mésalliance*, or grafted on this noble tree any shoot unworthy of the Traverses. Seldom did a day pass without his bringing forth this treasure, and asking his wife to study it with him; but the honeymoon had not elapsed before Lady Travers let him comprehend that she preferred any other book; and that, having an accurate memory, she did not require to be daily told of the marriages and intermarriages it contained, nor of how soon after the Deluge the first Travers flourished.

That any more interesting topic could be found, never entered into the head of Sir Henry; and his opinion of his wife's understanding underwent a very unfavourable change when he became aware of the difference of their opinions on this point. Destitute of all companionable qualities, he was insensible to the merits she really possessed in a knowledge of society and modern litera-

ture, which latter, if not profound enough to justify her ranking high in the scale of mental cultivation, at least fitted her for a conversable companion. A library had been one of the essentials of life never thought of by the ancestors of Sir Henry Travers; and he, finding the book of his genealogy quite sufficient for *his* studies, had never provided any others. This omission soon made itself heavily felt by Lady Travers, nor could the scantily-furnished and well-thumbed stock of the circulating library at —— supply the deficiency. Many were the obvious hints she gave of the necessity of buying books, and of the impossibility of living in the country without them; till, finding the hints disregarded, she had recourse to a request that an order might be sent to Dublin for a sufficient supply of good books to fill a bookcase in her private sitting-room.

"My mother, Lady Travers," replied the Baronet, "a most lady-like as well as amiable woman, required no library; *she* considered the society of her husband as a perfect substitute, and I should deem it a slight offered to her memory to order for *you* that which *she* did not want."

"How, then, am I to pass my time?" inquired Lady Travers, controlling, with much difficulty, the anger she felt rising in her breast.

"I should think that with your flower-knot, your embroidery, your conservatory, and your poultry-yard, you could not find time hang heavy on your hands, to say nothing of paying and receiving visits, and superintending the school established by my respected mother, and which has been neglected since her death."

To reason or argue with so obtuse a man, Lady Travers was convinced would be utterly unavailing, so she dropped the subject of buying books, determined to expend all that she could save from her pin-money in gradually fitting up a small library, or rather closet, with her favourite authors.

When she proposed to add some modern comforts to the heavy and old-fashioned furniture of the house, Sir Henry informed her that, having been selected by his mother, nothing could induce him to change the present furniture, and that he peculiarly disliked sofas or chairs that could be rolled from the wall against which they were placed.

"You will get accustomed to things as they are here in due time," observed he, "and I shall preserve the pleasing illusion of this house not having changed its mistress, by seeing everything left as in my mother's time."

When Lady Travers wished to exchange the dull and formal periodical dinners given regularly once a month, for smaller and more sociable ones once a fortnight, she was told that such an innovation on the habitude of the hall was not to be thought of. Twelve dinners a year, including all the neighbouring gentry, had always been the system adopted, and more he could not tolerate. Could Lady Travers have anticipated how little mistress of her house she would be, she would, in all human probability, have never accepted the hand of Sir Henry; but with sufficient perception to see that she must not hope to effect any change in his notions, she had wisdom enough to perceive that, if she wished for peace, she must submit patiently to what she could not alter. At her father's, she met some oft he officers of the —— Regiment, agreeable and rational men, who, glad to converse with a sensible

woman who had lived a good deal in England, paid her some attention, which, though strictly confined to the bounds of good breeding, struck her husband as greatly exceeding them. To talk of places where *he* had never been, of persons *he* did not know, and of books *he* had never read, seemed to to him exceedingly indecorous, if not wholly improper. He marked his sense of it by an increased reserve towards the officers with whom his wife had most conversed, and by informing her, during their drive home, that he "particularly objected to married women's flirting."

"Flirting!" reiterated Lady Travers, "what on earth do you call flirting?"

"Talking as familiarly with strangers as you did to-day. My revered mother would not have been so much at her ease with her oldest acquaintance, nay, with her most intimate friend, as you were with two or three men whom you never saw before."

"But we conversed only on ordinary and general topics; and I hope I know what is due to myself too well to encourage anything even bordering on flirtation."

"As our notions on this point differ, I

hope you will in future act in accordance with mine, Lady Travers; for I cannot tolerate in any woman, much less in her who bears my name, anything that my respected mother could have deemed incorrect. I mention my sentiments on this point at once, and without circumlocution, because, as I consider myself bound to call on the officers and to invite them to my house, as I have always done those who have been quartered at ——, I expect, Lady Travers, that you will maintain towards them that dignified reserve invariably adopted towards men by my mother."

Such were the lectures to which the newly-made wife had to submit, ere yet the days, generally supposed to be halcyon ones, of the honeymoon had expired. Anxious for peace, —happiness, she now found, being out of the question,—Lady Travers submitted to her *triste* destiny with as good a grace as she could, endeavouring to make the best of it by procuring for herself the comforts her impracticable husband refused to supply. A box of books, ordered by her from Dublin, arrived in due time, were placed in a closet that communicated with her sitting-room,

and an easy-chair and sofa for the latter apartment soon followed them. Their owner knew not until they came, how things previously looked on as mere necessaries become positive luxuries after having been some time withheld; and she was grateful that no *veto* against them was pronounced by her husband, which she had dreaded would be the case. Submission to annoyances which cannot be removed disarms them of half their bitterness. There is also a self-complacency arising from the consciousness of having conquered one's temper, which is very consolatory. Lady Travers felt this, as she blessed her stars that, if no happy hours had followed her marriage, no scene of quarrelling or bickering had, thanks to her forbearance, taken place; and she hoped that the freedom from all opposition on her part to the established rules of his house—which, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, must know no change—would in time render her stolid husband less exacting and more reasonable.

But greater trials awaited this modern Griselda,—trials demanding all her patience to support; for they restrained her personal

liberty, and threatened to impair her health, She became "as ladies wish to be who love their lords," and as even ladies who do not feel any peculiar affection for them desire to be; for, so strong is the natural tendency to maternity in woman's feelings, that few, if any, of the gentle sex can be found who do not aspire to be one day mothers. In many cases, the blessing of maternity is the one drop required to fill the cup of felicity; and great, unutterably great, is the joy and rapture it excites when accorded; but in less fortunate instances—and, unhappily, many such exist—the birth of a child is welcomed by its mother as the sweetener of her cup of bitterness, and loved the more because she has nothing else to love. To love Sir Henry Travers would be as impossible as to love a stock, or a stone. He had no one quality to excite affection, and a desire to maintain the constant exercise of forbearance and charity towards him was the only sentiment he awakened in the breast of his wife.

But even this unloving wife looked forward with pleasure to being a mother. The affection that she might have lavished on

a good husband, was ready to gush forth towards her infant, and many were the fond projects in which she indulged for the future, which its advent was to cheer and bless. No sooner, however, were these hopes revealed to Sir Henry Travers, than he announced to his wife the absolute necessity of her wholly changing her usual mode of existence. The safety—nay, more, the life—of *his* child, he declared, should not be exposed to any of the risks so often incurred by the imprudence of mothers. Lady Travers was to abandon all exercise, except a very gentle walk in the large drawing-room. She was to accept no invitations, give no dinners, and remain quietly on her *chaise longue*, or in her *bergère*, with her feet on a *tabouret* for seven months to come—must never venture in a carriage, or use any personal exercise. Even her *régime* must be wholly changed; it must consist only of white meat, with barley-water as her beverage. Tea, coffee—all stimulants, must be abandoned; for *his* child was too precious to have its well being exposed to the slightest risk; and all this because his revered mother (his wife had grown to hate the words) had

been so treated when *enceinte* of him, as she had often told him.

"But *your* mother may have been a delicate woman, and such treatment may have been requisite. I, *au contraire*, have very good health, am so accustomed to air and exercise as to require them, and should, I am sure, pine and grow ill if made a prisoner and treated like an invalid."

"I was only thinking of *my* child," replied Sir Henry Travers; "and I should think that you could not hesitate to sacrifice your own enjoyment to its health."

"Certainly not, if necessary; but, as I believe it to be highly advantageous to a child that its mother should be in good health, I really must consult Dr. Pennifold before I submit to your system."

"You may consult whom you please; but as *I* am convinced of the advantages to be derived from the adoption of the plan I have laid down, nothing shall induce me to suffer the least infringement on it."

"I have always understood that your mother was so very delicate as to be quite an invalid all her life."

"And would probably not have lived so

long, had she not rigorously pursued the *régime* I have determined on your adopting. Never was there so admirable and wise a woman. She was a pattern—a model to all her sex; and I owe it to her memory that my wife should follow her example in all things, as far as I can use my influence."

When Dr. Pennifold was consulted, he—who was a wise man, as well as a skilful physician, and who perfectly understood the character of Sir Henry Travers—advised his wife to avoid argument and opposition with him, and to preserve her health by taking as much exercise, whenever his absence permitted it, as would not fatigue her, and to have the windows of the rooms she inhabited always open in fine weather.

"A mutton cutlet," said the doctor, "or a slice of roast meat, must be had recourse to when Sir Henry is out of doors; and I shall take on myself to prescribe that he is to have a ride regularly every day, which will enable your ladyship to follow my counsel, which is absolutely necessary for your health and that of your infant. I shall instruct your housekeeper to arrange all these matters, so as that her master should know

nothing of our infringement on his *régime*—a *régime* that would, if followed, prove highly injurious to you. This will be a very innocent deception on our part, Lady Travers, and you must submit to it, as Sir Henry will obstinately adhere to the system of his mother, who, poor lady, had very bad health, and made it worse by bad management."

When Sir Henry entered the room, he was so pleased to find that Dr. Pennifold did not object to his plan for Lady Travers, that he consented to follow the doctor's advice to himself, to ride out every day for two hours, as being absolutely necessary for his health.

CHAPTER II.

We have recounted some of the matrimonial *désagrémens* of the elder daughter of the Fitzgerald family, and must now revert to those of the second, who, marrying under the erroneous impression that her husband should long continue to enact the *rôle* of a lover—a *rôle* for which neither nature nor habit had fitted him—soon began to feel extremely disappointed, when she found only a good-tempered, jovial companion, instead of a sentimental and tender lover. It argues ill for the power of perception of the lady, that she could have formed so false an opinion of her husband before he became such. But persons, and particularly ladies, are prone to see only what they wish in their admirers, and so, often discover when too late the

mistake they have made. Sensible women conceal their disappointment; but the less wise give way to its dictates, blaming the husband for not being what they had foolishly fancied him, and, by so doing, not unfrequently making him less bearable than nature intended him to be.

When, a few days after his marriage, Mr. Mac Vigors fell back into his bachelor habits of being a good deal out of doors, pursuing either his occupations or amusements, without ever consulting his bride on how she meant to pass her day, her surprise could only be equalled by her indignation, and both increased when she found that he seemed to think that if they met at breakfast and dinner it was quite enough. It is true she had carriages and horses, and might go where she pleased, for the least notion of interfering with her liberty or movements never entered his head; but, while ready to allow her this freedom, he was fully determined to preserve his own, and appeared to take it so entirely as a matter of course that he should do so, that she began to think herself the most ill used of her sex to be thus neglected ere yet the honeymoon was passed.

It was true, he was always in good humour. Air and exercise agreed with him. He came home from galloping across country, trying his dogs or looking over his farms, and, as he declared, as hungry as a hunter. The result was, that a copious dinner, washed down by sundry glasses of wine, produced so strong an inclination to slumber, that to resist its influence was impossible; and Mrs. Mac Vigors had not only to eat her fruit at dessert alone, but had her ears shocked by certain nasal sounds which indicated how profound was the sleep of her *caro sposo*. She was not one of those patient and tender wives who cover the head of a slumbering husband with a handkerchief to guard against cold, and who move stealthily for fear of awaking him. No, she gazed on him with disdainful eyes, noticing how very ugly even a good looking man appears when asleep, his face distorted by an uneasy posture and the pressure of a cravat. "Mr. Mac Vigors, Mr. Mac Vigors!" would she cry in her loudest tones, "if you *will* sleep, pray, in pity to my nerves, leave off snoring."

"Hollo! what's the matter?" would the slumberer exclaim, starting up; "I wasn't asleep, was I?"

"Not only asleep, but snoring so abominably as to quite shatter my nerves. It would be better for you to retire to your pillow at once, when the inclination to sleep assails you, than to indulge in this odious habit."

"What, and leave you alone, my dear?"

"I would infinitely prefer it to hearing you snore."

"You'll get used to it, in the course of time. I assure you, you will, Kate, for I know it by experience. When my great Newfoundland dog, Neptune, used to snore, as he slept on the rug before the fire, it used at first to disturb me, but after a month or two I didn't mind it a bit."

"I am not so tolerant to brutes," was the reply; and the lady arose from her chair and walked into the sitting-room.

"I suspect I was included in the plural number of brutes," thought Mr. Mac Vigors. "Poor Kate! she has found out the difference between a husband and a lover, and is vexed; but the fault is not mine. If she *would* have me play the fool before we were married, there is no reason why I should continue to enact the *rôle*, now. No, no, I'll bear with her ill humour, and she must

learn to submit to my sleeping after dinner."

When Mr. Mac Vigors joined his wife in her sitting-room, determined to atone for his *siesta* by some marks of attention, he approached, took her hand, and stooped to kiss her forehead. The hand was hastily withdrawn, as if a viper had stung it, and the head turned away. "Come, Kate, let us kiss and be friends, as children say. You are cross, because I slept; but, 'pon my soul, I could not help it. I am now as fresh as a four-year old horse, and ready to act the agreeable as well as I can, if you will let me."

"Pray don't trouble yourself about me, Mr. Mac Vigors. I dare say, as you observed in the dining-room, relative to your snoring, that I shall get use to your coldness and indifference in time." And a cambric handkerchief was drawn forth with the air of a tragedy queen, and applied to the lady's eyes.

"You surely are not crying, my dear Kate? There, then, let me wipe your poor eyes. How can you say I am cold, or indifferent?"

"And how else can I account for your conduct? Do you not absent yourself from

home all day?—go to sleep as soon as dinner is over, without ever thinking of how *I* am to pass my time, or amuse myself."

"Can you not account for all these sins of omission and commission more simply, naturally, and truly, by attributing them to the habit of self-indulgence peculiar to a spoiled bachelor? I should become a perfect bore to you, were I to follow you about like a tame lapdog, and be always acting company. I have been used to live almost the whole day in the open air. The habit has become fixed, and I should be ill were I to abandon it. I have been accustomed to fall asleep after dinner, and can't break myself of it. But, hang me, Kate, if you have any reason to complain of my coldness, or indifference; for I have given the best proof of the reverse, by preferring you to all other women. There is nothing you can wish for, and which my fortune can afford, that I will refuse you. You may order what you like, turn the house topsy-turvy, if you wish; but do not try to make me anything but what nature has made me—a plain, good-natured fellow, who *will* have his way, but who will never prevent you from having yours; and who, if not meant to

be a lady's man, can be an affectionate and indulgent husband."

"But why did you act so very differently before we were married? Then you were all attention."

"Because I was acting the part that you *would* have me act. All men are, more or less, acting a *rôle* in their days of courtship. You women will exact this, or not accept them. The object for which they play this part gained, they throw off the mask and fall back to their natural character. If a wife is good-natured enough to tolerate this, they like her better and better every day; but, if she resents it, they think her selfish, unreasonable, and exacting. The result, as you may conclude, is never happy."

While the husband was speaking, he continued to wipe the eyes of his wife with a tenderness such as a fond mother uses towards a froward child whom she wishes to soothe. His right arm encircled her waist, whilst the left one dried her tears; and, after a few sobs, Mrs. Mac Vigors whispered, "But are you sure that you love me as well as before we were married?"

"Fifty times better, Kate, 'pon my soul;

and, if you will be reasonable and good-natured, I shall love you every day more."

The lady placed her hand in her husband's, smiled, and advanced her cheek to his, on which he imprinted a kiss. And thus ended the first matrimonial quarrel between them.

When Mrs. Mac Vigors, in a few days after the scene we have described, drove her pony phaeton to pay a visit to Lady Travers, she found her sister confined to her sofa, while Sir Henry, seated by her side, worried her by reading aloud in a most monotonous tone of voice, a work entitled, "Advice to Young Wives who hope to become Mothers." The book was laid down by the Baronet with an ill-dissembled air of courtesy, while an expression of annoyance and disappointment at the interruption was very visible in his countenance. To poor Lady Travers the visit seemed a relief for which she could not be sufficiently grateful. "You will have some luncheon, Kate, will you not?" said she.

"Certainly: my drive has given me a good appetite. And you, I hope, Florence, will join me?"

"Lady Travers's delicate situation precludes her from certain indulgences," observed Sir Henry, gravely.

"I should have thought, *au contraire*, that it entailed the necessity of them," replied Mrs. Mac Vigors.

"My mother, than whom no woman better understood the care and precautions to be adopted by ladies under peculiar circumstances, laid down a system which I have requested Lady Travers to pursue."

"But, my good Sir Henry, all the systems of fifty years ago are now exploded. *Nous avons changés tout cela.*"

This direct reference to his age, deeply mortified Sir Henry, and indisposed him to her who made it. The luncheon being now announced, Lady Travers made a move to rise from her recumbent posture, to accompany her sister to the *salle à manger*.

"Good Heavens! Lady Travers, what are you about?" exclaimed her husband, with an alarmed countenance.

"I only meant to go to the dining-room with Kate."

"You had much better remain on your sofa; Mrs. Mac Vigors can understand the necessity of repose and quiet in your state."

"Are you at all suffering, Florence?" inquired her sister.

"Only tired of always lying on the sofa," was the reply.

"Sacrifices must be made when hopes are entertained of giving an heir to an ancient *house*," observed Sir Henry Travers, with an assumption of as much dignity as if he were sovereign of a realm, long disappointed in its hopes of an heir to the crown, and now once more aspiring to such a blessing.

"But the heir to an ancient—nay, more, to a royal house, would be dearly bought by the sacrifice of the health of its mother," remarked Mrs. Mac Vigors; "and, what is more, a woman sickly while giving hopes of becoming one would not be likely to have a healthy child."

"My revered mother's opinions on this, as well as on all other subjects of importance, I make the guide of my life, and never intend to depart from."

"Do go and have your luncheon, dear Kate," said Lady Travers, beginning to be fearful that a misunderstanding might occur between her sister and her husband, "that you may come back to me."

"I must prohibit your conversing any more to-day, Lady Travers," said Sir Henry

Travers; "you look excited and feverish. You really must be kept quiet, indeed you must."

"As I am not to see my sister after her luncheon, I must inquire after Mr. Mac Vigors. How is he, and why is he not with you?"

"He is quite well, I dare say, but I have not seen him to-day. He generally mounts his horse before I open my eyes; but we always meet at dinner."

"You are quite independent of each other, then, during the day?"

"Perfectly. I have horses and carriages, may go where I please, and when I please. He takes the same liberty that he gives, and we meet at dinner, delighted to see each other after the separation of the day. This is the true way, be assured, to enjoy happiness in wedded life. People get bored with each other who are always together, and I should, above all things in the world, dislike having a husband who was tied to my apron-strings, and always in my way."

In this instance, Mrs. Mac Vigors did not speak her real sentiments, but she was actuated by two motives for having recourse to

this insincerity. The first was that she wished to have it believed by those to whom she spoke, that this independence which she pretended to like was as much *her* choice as her husband's; and the second, that she wished to reprove her brother-in-law for the different line of conduct he had adopted. Gladly would she have engrossed her husband's company for at least several hours of the day; not that it afforded her any very peculiar pleasure, but simply that she disliked being alone, and wished to have it supposed that Mr. Mac Vigors was still more the lover than the husband. Finding, however, that she could effect no change, or even any modification, in his habits, she thought it best to affect a perfect satisfaction in them: a piece of dissimulation which, originating in an excessive *amour propre*, produced as fortunate a result in her domestic comfort as if it had been dictated by wisdom.

Sir Henry Travers felt the implied reproof, but it had no good effect; on the contrary, he began to think her sister a very dangerous companion for his wife—one with whose position she might compare notes, and draw comparisons unfavourable to the implicit

obedience he was determined to exact. But he did not render justice to Lady Travers. So anxious was she to avoid altercations and to ensure peace, as a substitute for happiness, that she would have submitted even to greater annoyances than those he imposed (had such been possible) rather than remonstrate or argue with a man on whose obtuse and narrow mind neither remonstrance nor argument could produce any salutary effect.

"Poor Florence!" thought Mrs. Mac Vigors, as she drove her pretty ponies a brisk pace towards home, "how much more fortunate is my lot than hers! Poor soul! that absurd man will, I fear, embitter her days, if he does not abridge them. And I was so foolish as to be dissatisfied with my fate; when compared with hers it is perfect happiness. Heigh-ho! what foolish expectations we women form before we marry, and how few of even the happiest of our sex could say, after the honeymoon had passed, that their notions of conjugal felicity had been realized?"

"While these reflections were passing in the mind of Mrs. Mac Vigors, Sir Henry Travers, fearful that her visit might have engen-

dered discontent in his wife, assumed a very grave air, and inquired, "Whether she did not think there was something very strange, not to say improper and masculine, to have a lady driving about the country alone, without the protection of her husband?"

"If her husband does not object to it, we have no right to find fault," was the reply.

"I did not think of any right on our part to meddle in the matter; but this I know, that my revered mother would have highly disapproved such a measure. Often did she say to me, 'Henry, when I am dead and gone, don't forget my opinions, nor cease to adhere to them. Never let your wife take on herself to act, on any occasion, otherwise than as *you* think *I* would have approved and sanctioned. I will give you certain rules, applicable to most, if not to all points, connected with domestic life and conduct. Refer to them on every occasion. Permit no arguments nor remonstrances against them, and you will increase your respectability and peace?' Dear and revered mother, never will I disobey your instructions."

CHAPTER III.

When Mordant received the Countess O'Neill's answer to his letter, although deeply mortified and disappointed by its contents, he was compelled to admit that the line of conduct she had adopted was the correct one. But this admission on his part offered no oil nor wine to the wound inflicted on his heart. It still bled, and threatened to remain many years, if not for ever, unhealed. Absence did not diminish *his* affection, though it sometimes has that effect with that of many of his sex; but Mordant's was not a light nor unthinking character, susceptible of forming attachments, and of easily forgetting them. No; when he loved, the passion was of a serious and lasting nature, and he felt it to be so. Hence, he believed

that, although his position precluded any hope of his ever calling Grace O'Neill his, the sentiment she had awakened was too profound to permit of his ever thinking of any other woman. She was his fate, and he made no attempt to escape from the thraldom in which he was bound, though it offered only pain and regret. He heard often from Herbert Vernon, who never wrote without referring to Miss O'Neill.

"I go often into society here," said he, in one of his recent letters, "to please my mother. She thinks that it will divert my thoughts from the sadness that has taken possession of them, and that I may meet some young beauty to chase Grace—the incomparable Grace—from my heart. I owe too much to my indulgent parents to refuse obeying *their* wishes, when they were so ready to meet mine, and to accept unseen, unknown, the bride I sought to present to them, merely on the faith they reposed in me. How they would have loved—have worshipped—Grace! I often think that I should like for them to see—to know her. It would justify—it would elevate—me in their eyes; for they would acknowledge how

superior she is to every other woman. And to think of such a creature buried in a country town in Ireland! And yet I am selfish enough to rejoice that she is there, away from the homage that must await her were she in London, where, among the crowd, she might find some one worthy of her hand. I know this is being selfish and wrong; but you, Mordant, are the only man to whom I could, without envy and jealousy, resign her, because I believe she loved you, and that you would render her happy. But I cannot forgive you for not demanding her hand, and vanquishing the scruples of the Countess O'Neill to bestow it on you, without waiting the consent of your father and mother. Were Grace portionless, I could sympathize with the pride and delicacy of her grandmother in refusing to allow her to enter a family who were not ready to welcome her with pride and pleasure; but her having a fortune adequate to all the comforts of life alters the case completely, and might, if you had openly and truly revealed your exact position to the Countess, have won her consent.

"Your mother is the only one of your

family who would be strongly opposed to the marriage, for she absolutely thinks that it is your duty to bring a large fortune into it. *Your* happiness is not thought of, or, if it be, she concludes that money must secure it. This is not mere supposition on my part, for I heard her, a few days ago, assert that wealth was the sole bestower of felicity. This confession was *à propos* of Hunter's father, whom she thinks the most enviable man in England, except in the single instance of his son having married an Irish adventuress,—as she calls our old acquaintance, Honor O'Flaherty,—when he might have wedded, as she says, the daughter of any duke in England. By-the-bye, I must tell you that the said Honor has a *grand succes* in London. The vulgar adage has it that 'fine feathers make fine birds;' but how far the fair Hibernian is indebted to her fine dresses and magnificent jewels for the admiration she excites, I will not decide. But this I must say, that never did I imagine that so great a metamorphose could be effected in any woman as has taken place in her, and in so short a time, too. It is really incredible. Cold, dignified, and reserved, she

really looks a queen—seems neither surprised nor elated by her good fortune, nor its results. She throws a shield before the family into which she has entered, by the self-respect visible in all her movements and actions; and few, if any, dare venture to quiz or laugh at them in her presence, so grave and imposing are her air and manner. Never does she, for a moment, forget her *rôle*, nor permit any one to approach her except with the respect due to a woman of the highest rank and position. Her appearance is very commanding, and yet does not seem affected. None of her old friends could recognise in the stately dame sparkling in diamonds, who is 'the observed of all observers' in the highest circles in London, the madcap Irish girl who, but a few months ago, used to set us all laughing by her wild freaks and droll sayings,

"Her husband is no less changed than she is. He has left off his slang phrases and vulgar manners, remains by the side of *la grande dame*, looks positively like a gentleman, and is evidently very proud of her. In short, he is now, in manners and appearance, perfectly *comme il faut*. His parents

treat his wife with profound respect. Mrs. James, as they term her, must be no common person, and is decidedly a most accomplished actress, who never breaks down in her *rôle*. I heard of an amusing scene which occurred a short time ago at a dinner at Mr. Hunter's, in which your mother played rather a conspicuous part. She was repeating a report in general circulation, and, unlike the general ones, correct, namely, that *I* had been refused by a young Irish lady, with whom I was desperately in love.

"'The most incomprehensible part of the affair is, that Lord and Lady Mellborough had at once given their consent to the marriage,' said Lady Mordant.

"'But why was that incomprehensible?' inquired old Hunter. 'If their son liked the girl, and there was nothing against her reputation, I don't see what they could object to.'

"'Why, their only son, who will be an earl with a large fortune, might marry any young lady of high birth and fortune he liked; while the young person in question is a nobody, has no fortune, and is nothing more nor less than the *belle* of some country

town in Ireland, where Mr. Herbert Vernon's regiment happened to be quartered.'

"Mrs. James's face flushed with anger at this speech of Lady Mordant, and, turning to her with an air of great dignity, she said,

"'Permit me to rectify a mistake of your ladyship. Miss O'Neill, the young lady who Mr. Herbert Vernon wished to marry, instead of being a nobody, as you described, is the descendant of kings, and the granddaughter of the celebrated Count O'Neill, one of the most distinguished generals in the Austrian army. So far from being poor, she has a very good fortune, and is one of the most accomplished and charming young persons in the world.'

"'Indeed,' said Lady Mordant, somewhat superciliously: 'it is a pity she did not condescend to become future Countess of Mellborough; but I suppose her royal descent prevented her marrying any one less than a prince.'

"'Her royal descent had no influence in the matter; though I take leave to assure your ladyship that Miss O'Neill, like all the other persons who can claim a lineal descent from the ancient sovereigns of Ireland, never

could suppose that this circumstance should expose them to the contumely or ridicule of those who ought to know better than to sneer at what they do not comprehend.'

"This little episode had a good effect; for it proved beyond a doubt that Mrs. James was not a person to submit to anything she considered derogatory to her dignity, and prevented Lady Mordant from proceeding any further in 'the war of words' with one whom she found so perfectly capable of taking her own part."

"My mother, my mother, always my mother!" exclaimed Mordant. "She seems determined never to be quiet. Can it be possible that she has heard of my passion for Grace, and, angered by the statement, avenged herself on that charming girl by speaking slightingly of her? How unworthy! Or, on reflection, may she not have been piqued by the stateliness of Mrs. James Hunter, into giving *her* a *coup de patte* through her friend and countrywoman? Whatever might have been the motive, I heartily regret the circumstance. Yes, I well knew that my mother, irascible and unreasonable as she sometimes is, could not fail

to insult the Countess O'Neill and her granddaughter, had I appealed to her for her sanction to my proposing for the hand of the latter; and even had I won the Countess's consent, unsanctioned by my mother, and had become blessed with the hand of Grace, I am certain insults would have been heaped on her that I would rather die than expose her to. Yes, wretched as I am at our separation, it is preferable to having subjected one so unutterably dear to me to insult, or to have drawn on the Countess O'Neill, whom I so truly esteem and venerate, the angry reproaches of my mother.

"No one can feel more respect for the claims of parents on their children than I do; but really, while ready to admit it, I must say that parents are quite as often unreasonable in their conduct towards their offspring as their offspring are towards them. My mother, I know, fully calculates on my forming a marriage that would enable me to extricate my father and her out of the pecuniary embarrassments into which their mutually expensive habits have plunged them. I have been made to comprehend this expectation by every possible means in her power; hence

she would never tolerate any alliance that could interfere with her projects, nor let me nor mine enjoy peace if I thwarted her plans. Heigh-ho! how little chance have I of happiness, though one bright vista opened through which I could behold it; for I am quite of Vernon's opinion, that, had I intrusted the Countess O'Neill with the whole state of the case, she would have bestowed on me the hand of Grace."

Such were the reflections that constantly presented themselves to the mind of Mordant, who led a solitary life, while many of the officers of the regiment greatly enjoyed the cheerful and pleasant society that abounded in the quarters where they were now stationed. At the mess, he heard of agreeable dinners, occasional balls, pic-nics, and riding parties in the beautiful environs of Cork. But he, having returned the visits paid him, declined the numerous invitations which soon followed them; for he felt unwilling to mingle in pleasures for which his low spirits peculiarly unfitted him. Often would he indulge in a solitary ride to the fine scenery of Upper and Lower Glanmire, or a sail to the Cove, finding more relief

from his depression of spirits amid the beauties of nature, than in the society of the gay and thoughtless, whose pleasures he did not envy. Often, too, did he turn his eyes to the horizon near to which dwelt the dear object on whom all his thoughts centered; and, as he pictured to himself the lovely being walking amidst the flowers of her garden, culling some for the vases of the drawing-room—always redolent of their fragrance, or seated in that well-remembered room in which he had so frequently formed a happy trio, and wondered if he was as fondly recalled to mind there as its inhabitants were by him.

Mordant had, on leaving, determined to apply for leave of absence to visit England; but he postponed doing so from day to day. Those who have loved—and those only—will comprehend the feelings that checked him from placing the sea between him and her so dear. To be in the same country with her was something; to know that in two days, nay, in even less, he could reach her, could any happy chance occur to furnish an excuse for his presenting himself, rendered him averse to leaving Cork. But what chance was there in the whole list of casual-

ties that could furnish this excuse? Alas! reason too plainly told him there was none; and he was tempted to smile at his own weakness, which still induced him to remain within reach of her he could not hope to see. Then the thought of writing to Patrick O'Donohough occurred to him. Through him he could, at least, learn that his young mistress was well; could hear whether all went on as when he had the blissful privilege of seeing the object of his affections twice every day,—a privilege which it now appeared to him he had not sufficiently appreciated while he was enjoying it; but which, now that it was debarred him, seemed a happiness too great not to be followed by some such sad reverse. O! how blessed were those days when he awoke in the morning with the certainty of seeing her in a few hours, and those nights when he left her with the prospect of beholding her again on the morrow! How often, when at night he had bade her farewell, used he, instead of retiring to his pillow, to wander around her abode, as ghosts are said to haunt the scenes of past happiness! He would watch the light disappear from the drawing-room he

had so lately left, and see it appear in her chamber, and gaze on it until it was extinguished, when he would turn his steps towards home. Was it not happiness to be able to do this? Ah! yes, he now felt it was, and reproached himself that while in possession of it he had not sufficiently prized it.

But what if Patrick O'Donohough should not answer his letter, or should acquaint the Countess of his having written to him? Might not the Countess think it wrong in him to attempt to keep up a clandestine correspondence with her servant? And yet it would be such a consolation to him to know that Grace was well—was happy! No, not quite—*quite* happy. Mordant was not unselfish enough to wish her to be perfectly happy, because to be so would be to prove that his absence occasioned her no pain, cast no gloom over her. He did not wish to know that the rose paled on her cheek—that her slight but rounded form lost aught of its exquisite symmetry; for such changes would betoken decrease of health. He only wished to be assured that a sigh often escaped from her heart; that a pearly tear sometimes bedewed

her cheeks; and that thoughts of *him* had called them forth!

Lovers are the worst casuists in the world, as relates to health. They would start in terror did they know that the demonstrations of affection which they wish to behold in those dear to them, namely, pale cheeks and tear-dimmed eyes, can only spring from emotions too deep to be long experienced without seriously impairing health; for the mind cannot suffer without the body suffering, too. In short, more unreasonable than all other men, lovers wish the ladies of their love to be miserable when separated from them, yet, nevertheless, retain their beauty; and few, we believe, of the sex would be disposed to love a woman the better when they traced the sufferings inflicted on her by her affection for them—if, indeed, they continued to love her at all—when her personal attractions became impaired. So convinced are we of the ingratitude of mankind on this point, that we would strenuously advise every woman separated from him she loves, whatever may be the extent of her regret, carefully to attend to the preservation of her beauty, being assured that she who welcomes

the return of her lover with undimmed eyes, rosy cheeks, and rounded form, will be more dear to him than her whose beauty has faded by her sorrow for his absence.

CHAPTER IV.

We left Mrs. James Hunter established in the splendid mansion of the parents of her husband, carefully concealing from them, as well as from all with whom she came in contact, any symptom of the surprise and pleasure which the style of the house, the richness of its decorations, and the splendour of the mode of living of its owners, excited in her mind. Any one who had seen Mrs. James Hunter in her present abode, surrounded by every luxury that wealth could present, as unmoved as if from her birth she had been accustomed to them, would have found it difficult to believe that, until she had entered that dwelling a short time before, she had never beheld any house superior to the comfortable, but simply furnished, resi-

dences of her former friends and neighbours, in the remote part of Ireland where she had hitherto lived; residences in which comfort had been much more attended to than elegance, and in which the furniture was not only plain, but of the fashion of half a century before, and somewhat the worse for wear. But, had the small and homely dwelling in which she had lived with her mother and their sole servant been seen, compared with which her present home was as a gorgeous palace, the beholder would, indeed, have marvelled at the *sang froid* she exhibited. The most dazzling and costly gifts presented to her by her father-in-law, who was never tired of lavishing presents on her, called forth no symptom of the surprise which such beautiful things might have caused even in a young woman of the highest birth. They were accepted with a calm and dignified politeness, and were worn with an apparent unconsciousness either of their great value or that she now put on such rich ornaments for the first time in her life.

But, while careful to maintain her own dignity, Mrs. James Hunter evinced peculiar tact in never encroaching on that of her husband's

parents. She exercised the most scrupulous politeness towards them, without the slightest approach to subserviency; and, so punctilious was she in this respect, that it checked all attempts, if not all desire, on their part, to any more familiarity than she wished to establish between them. She might have taken for her device, "*Nil admirari*," so carefully did she avoid betraying any admiration, or wonder, at the splendour around her; and, although somewhat disappointed at her not being dazzled by their riches and grandeur, strange to say, her father and mother-in-law admired and respected her much more for this proof of her superiority.

Beauty never fails to make its influence felt by men, even on the old as well as on the young; and the nearest relatives and connections are not exempt from feeling its power. Mr. Hunter, always a warm admirer of beauty, was peculiarly struck by that of his daughter-in-law; and, when he daily beheld her attired in the rich and tasteful habiliments which she owed to his liberality, he felt she was, indeed, an ornament to his family, and something to be proud of. If a wish did sometimes arise in his breast that

she should be more like a daughter to him, than a stately visitor, that he could treat her like a favourite child instead of a grand lady; in short, that habits of cordiality and affection should spring up between them in the place of mere courtesy and politeness, he checked the wish and the sigh that followed it, with the reflection that "one could not have everything that one wished in this world, and that he had much to be grateful for in all the good fortune that had crowned his industry, and, therefore, that he ought not to repine."

Mrs. Hunter bore with less equanimity the cold politeness of her daughter-in-law, and frequently made complaints to her husband on the subject. "But what cause have you to grumble so continually about her?" he would reply. "Is she not always perfectly well bred! Does she ever utter a word that could be tortured into incivility?"

"Perhaps not; but there is a certain manner which, although I cannot exactly describe it, Mr. Hunter, gives one to understand, as as plain as words ever did, that one is not to take liberties with the person who assumes it."

"But how do you know that it is assumed, my dear? It may be, and I should certainly say it is, perfectly natural; for it has never changed a single minute since she has been here."

"That may be; but my poor dear James assured me when first they came here, and we were speaking confidentially together, that, when he was courting her, or, as he says, when she was courting him, she was the gayest, liveliest madcap he ever saw, and used to make him laugh all day long; and that's how he grew to like her so well that he eloped with her."

"James is a fool!" observed his father, knitting his brows, and looking very grave. "Had his wife been what he describes, she would have been unbearable in my eyes, and none but a blockhead would select such a wife. But, instead of a hoyden—a wild Irish madcap, he brings us home a handsome, noble-looking creature, against whom we cannot allege a single fault, except her being too stately, too ceremonious—if, indeed, these be faults, which I doubt; for I well remember one of the first lessons set me in my copybook was 'Familiarity breeds contempt.'

Hence, I am not sorry to find that our daughter-in-law respects that good old adage."

"But James, our son, our *only* child, Mr. Hunter,—is *his* happiness not to be considered?"

"For once in his life he has shown some wisdom, and that in the most important point, in choosing a wife who would render any reasonable man happy. Had it been the reverse—had his wife proved to be the person he fancied, and even more—he could have no one to blame but himself, as the marriage was all his own seeking. Luckily for him, and for us, too, she has turned out a steady, ladylike young woman; and he ought to bless his good fortune at the change, if, indeed, there be any change in his wife's mind and manners, which, as I before told you, I doubt."

"But, was it fair to impose on him, Mr. Hunter? If, knowing that he liked a wild and giddy girl, was it honest to make believe to be such, and then when the knot was tied to turn round on him, and show herself in her true colours?"

"Many high-spirited and wild girls have been immediately sobered by matrimony, my

dear; and this may have been the case with Mrs. James Hunter."

"O! I see you are determined to favour her in everything, Mr. Hunter, and to look over the unhappiness of our own, our *only* child" And Mrs. Hunter drew out her handkerchief, and applied it to her eyes.

"'Pon my soul, Martha, this is too much! I am to pity a foolish chap who has had the good luck to get hold of one of the handsomest girls I ever beheld; and, what is more, as steady and well-behaved a creature as one would wish to meet, without a single grain of coquetry or vanity about her, and by no means ill-humoured; and he, forsooth, is to be pitied by his parents, whose leave or license he never asked to marry her? Why, let me tell you, Mrs. Hunter, that there is many a father who would have cast him off for ever for such conduct, and even the most lenient could hardly have been expected to forgive him at once, and receive him and his wife in our house. But the truth is, *you* spoilt James. You always let him have his own way; *you* could refuse him nothing; and, whenever *I* wished to assert the control that a father should main-

tain over his son, *you* injudiciously interfered to protect your darling from the effects of my disapproval of his follies, and, by your entreaties and tears, won my forbearance, and I take shame to myself for it."

"I see how it is, Mr. Hunter; I see plainly how it is. Your new daughter has cut out your poor son, a-n-d h-i-s mo-th-er, too." And here the tears and sobs of Mrs. Hunter interrupted her words for a moment. "You can't see, Mr. Hunter, or rather you *won't* see, that she kee-ps p-o-or James u-n-der as great a constraint as if he was a child, and she was his schoolmistress. She won't let him join the Four-in-hand Club; she won't allow him to go to Newmarket, nor to have racers there; nor to go to Melton to hunt, nor, in short, to do anything he wishes; and it breaks my heart, so it does, to see him, poor dear fellow, who never was denied anything, nor even minded what I, his own mother, told him, kept under so much by a wife who ran away with him, and who is no older than himself."

"I am delighted to hear it, Mrs. Hunter; for, though I gave our daughter-in-law credit for much good sense, I was not, I confess,

prepared to find that she exercises such a wholesome control over her husband. It greatly raises her in my estimation, I assure you, and now I shall begin to hope that, through her influence, James may turn out a more respectable man than I expected."

"Just as I said, Mr. Hunter, just as I said. This Irish princess, as she seems to think herself, has bewitched you; and now you think no more of your poor wife and son than if they were nothing to you. Oh! Mr. Hunter, and all this for a stranger, for an *Irishwoman!*" and Mrs. Hunter's tears flowed afresh.

"'Pon my soul, Martha, you are enough to drive me mad! Having completely spoilt our son by your foolish indulgence, you now resent the influence his wife exercises over him, and would fain encourage him to emancipate himself from it,—a step which must lead to his ruin; and, because I approve her conduct, hoping, as I do, that it may eventually correct the mischief your excessive indulgence has done, you accuse me of preferring my daughter-in-law to you, and to our son! Martha, if you value my affection, don't give way to such folly; for, although I

am naturally patient, I may be tried too much." And here Mr. Hunter, looking more sternly than his wife had ever previously seen him do, left the room, without any attempt to dry the tears that were fast rolling down her cheeks.

"I never thought it would come to this," thought Mrs. Hunter, weeping still more than before. "Never since I have been his wife, now five-and-twenty years, did he ever leave me in tears! He, who never could bear to see me cry, now walks off without as much as saying, 'Don't weep, Martha. It distresses me to see you in tears.' Yes, it's all over: I see it plainly. From the very first of her coming here he seemed bewitched by her: and I, fool that I was, took all his liking to her to proceed from his love for our son! I could bear anything, but to hear him hold my darling boy so cheap, and make so much of *her*, who is nothing to him except through his son. It was an unlucky day when she came into this house to turn a man against his own kith and kin; but I always disliked the Irish, so I did, and now I hate them more than ever, since I see what they are capable of."

At this moment, Mr. James Hunter entered the room, and, seeing the tears and agitation of his mother, inquired the cause. "I say, old girl, what's the matter with you?" and he took her hand kindly. "Come, come, don't go on crying like a baby, but tell me what's happened."

"It's all on account of your wife; I wish I had never seen her, a good-for-nothing, proud Irishwoman, who has gone and made mischief between your father and me."

"You don't mean to say that Honor has been to make complaints of you or of me to the governor? That's not like her at all, I can tell you, old girl."

"I didn't say she had," replied Mrs. Hunter, looking foolish and confused.

"But you said she had been to make mischief between you and the governor; and how could she do this if she has made no complaint?"

"I only meant that, whenever I say a word against her, your father flares up and takes her part against me, and against you, too, my dear boy, and that breaks my heart."

"So the complaint was against Honor by you, old girl, and not by *her* against you! I

thought it was not like her to be given to attack any one behind his or her back. No, to give the devil his due, Honor is not capable of double dealings, or underhand doings."

"And do you mean to say that I am, James? Oh! the ingratitude of some people in this world!"

"Well, old girl, if you must have the truth, all I can say is, that, if you went backbiting Honor to the governor, I think you *were* capable of double dealing."

"This is too bad, too bad, when it was all on *your* account."

"*My* account! Why, what had *I* to do in the affair?"

"I could not bear to see how she tyrannizes over you; how she won't let you do this nor do that; how she treats you as if you were only a child, and she your schoolmistress."

"In short, mother, you don't like to see my wife correct the work you have been employed at ever since I was born."

"What work? What do you mean, James?"

"The work of spoiling me, mother; and bad work it was."

"Oh! was there ever such ingratitude seen? I, who doted on you, who never could bear to deny you anything, who interfered whenever your father was angry, and prevented his punishing you, and now to be told I have spoilt you! Oh! this is the cruellest cut of all." And Mrs. Hunter wept in uncontrollable emotion.

"Come, mother, don't cry, it will only make you ill. What's passed is passed, and its no use looking back, except to try and remedy it. The truth is, you terribly spoilt me. You meant it for the best, I am sure you did;" and Mr. James Hunter took his mother's hand kindly, and kissed her cheek. "Honor tries her best to make me reasonable. She can only do so from the best motives. If she didn't care a pin for me, she might let me make as great a fool of myself as I liked; but, she wishes her husband to be like other men, or a little better, if she can make him so; and, instead of being obliged to her, mother, you go and speak against her to the governor. This was not well, mother, and I'm sorry you did it."

"It has done her no harm, and you need not be so sorry, James; for all I could say only

made your father take her part and like her better. She has bewitched him; yes, positively bewitched him. God forgive her for turning a man against his own wife and child!"

"It is our own fault, mother, if the governor has turned against us. He's the most reasonable man in the world, that he is; though I was such a fool as never to have found it out until Honor not only told me, but proved it. He has had the patience of a saint with me, while I was thinking I had a perfect right to commit all the follies that came into my head, well assured that you would induce my father to overlook them."

"And so I would, my dear James, for you are my only child, my darling. Yet now you, too, turn against me, and prefer her who tyrannizes over you to your doting mother, who could deny you nothing."

"You are mistaken, mother, indeed you are. I love you truly, and will always be ready to prove it. If you could hear how Honor reproves me for calling you 'old girl,' and for not being sufficiently respectful to you and my father, you would not suspect her of turning any one against you. She speaks the truth. She tells me my faults,

and encourages me to mend them; and I mean to try. You'll find me all the better for her advice; so, here, give me another kiss, but never, if you love me, speak against Honor again."

CHAPTER V.

To explain the change effected in the character of Mrs. James Hunter, and that which she was assiduously endeavouring to work out in the conduct of her husband, we must return to her first establishment in the mansion of her father and mother-in-law. With all her levity and wilfulness, she was not deficient in proper feelings when her passions did not interfere to warp or silence them. The ruling one of her girlhood had been to marry a rich husband, and, this point accomplished, better thoughts awoke in her mind. It was not any inordinate love of wealth, nor of the luxuries it can command, which induced Honor O'Flaherty to set her heart on marrying a rich man; but the state of dependence in which she had seen her

mother live,—a dependence which, although lightened as much as kindness could lighten it, nevertheless galled her naturally proud spirit, and she longed to emancipate herself and her parent from it. She saw that, although young and handsome, she was passed unnoticed by the men with whom she came in contact in society, while girls with far less personal attractions excited infinitely more admiration. Or, if her beauty drew attention, it was only for a flirtation at a ball, or to pass the idle hours of the young men, who had no more serious intentions in addressing their temporary homage to her. This wounded her pride, and she, poor girl, adopted the most injudicious mode of resenting the real or imagined slights offered to her, by treating her male acquaintances with a half bantering, half satirical tone of freedom, which, though it often turned the laugh against them, by the hard hits this unladylike raillery contained, was little calculated to gain her esteem, or respect.

Admitted by all to be extremely handsome, Honor repelled by her *brusquerie*, and free and easy tone, those whose admiration might have grown into a warmer feeling.

Ever on the defensive, she had a sarcasm ready on her lip, but no real malice in her heart. Having established a reputation for originality and independence of character—a dangerous reputation for any youthful and handsome girl, but more especially so for one without fortune, father, or brother—Honor was considered to be without the pale of matrimonial speculation. She had too late discovered her error; and often did a bitter pang shoot through her proud heart, when she noticed the respectful attention paid to other girls, and compared it with the impertinent *nonchalance* exhibited towards herself, by her male acquaintances. It is true that she tried to believe the difference was occasioned by her peculiar position; but she was not always successful in thus deceiving herself, and she had determined on making one desperate effort to secure a husband, *coûte que coûte*, when chance threw Mr. James Hunter in her way.

A quick perception of character was among the mental qualities of Honor O'Flaherty. She soon saw through his. Not a natural nor an acquired defect of his escaped her keen examination; and, although her pride re-

volted from the advantage she meditated taking of his weakness, she did not abandon her project, consoling herself with the sophistry, that, as he seemed born to become the prey of some designing woman, he may as well be hers as another's; and, also, with the intention that she would, when once married, exert all her enegies to render him, if not a wiser, at least a better man.

Few ever wilfully committed a first sin without applying the salve of some future intended good to their wounded consciences; but few are those who work out this intended good. Honor, however, was one of the few. Grateful for the unexampled kindness, under peculiar circumstances, accorded to her by the parents of her husband, she felt more than ever incited to correct the errors of their son, and to justify him in their eyes for having chosen her. To effect the task she assigned herself, as well also as to preclude any return or even symptom of the long-indulged levity and reckless gaiety of her nature, she at once adopted the artificial cold stateliness of manner and reserve we have before noticed; and the effect of which perfectly answered her expectations, by inspir-

ing a degree of deferential awe and respect which greatly tended to aid her projects.

It is true that, at the commencement, her husband murmured at this unlooked for change, and was much disposed to resent it; but her coldness and self-control mastered his attempts to take his own way, and, after a time, won him to acknowledge the justice of her strictures and the wisdom of her advice. It was before she had produced this salutary result that her husband, like a punished school-boy, had fled to his doting mother, to repose the secret of his imagined wrongs in her sympathizing breast. When, however, he ceased to complain, that good lady, never quick in apprehension, failed to suspect that "a change had come over the spirit of his dream," and that the reproofs which at first had vexed him, and the counsel he was little disposed to adopt, were now viewed in a very different light.

When Mr. James Hunter witnessed the general admiration and profound respect which his wife inspired, not only in his family, but wherever she was known—he began to be proud of her, and to listen with attention to her advice. Mrs. James Hun-

ter had rewards as well as punishments in store for her husband. When he was tractable, she treated him with a degree of deference before company that, by placing him in a better position, flattered his *amour propre;* and, when he rebelled, she maintained a proud silence towards him which greatly pained him. Commendations awaited him when he gave up any intended folly, and he soon learned to value them. To be treated with consideration by his stately wife in the presence of strangers, and, still more, in that of his father, was a bribe to good behaviour which Mr. James Hunter seldom resisted, and, after a time, Honor was repaid by marking with pleasure the great improvement effected in him by her judicious conduct.

His weak mother witnessed with inexpressible chagrin the change in her son. "He is bewitched, like his father, poor fellow," would she often say to herself, "and now never tells me a word about her tyranny, although it must be greater than ever, seeing that she hardly ever suffers him to go out of her sight. There they sit for hours every day in the library poring over

books, for all the world like two children learning their tasks; and, if I chance to look in they are side by side, and he who could not bear to look into a book, or hardly to read the newspaper, is content to stay there for half the day, and I can hear him, through the door, reading aloud to her while she is working. Yes, she must be indeed a witch, to get him to read, poor dear fellow! what will she get him to do next?"

Mrs. Hunter loved her son so passionately that she could not bear to have any one to divide his affection with her, and was, though probably unconscious of the fact, extremely jealous of his affection for his wife. It was this sentiment that made her receive with pleasure his confidence relative to the puerile complaints he had to make against Mrs. James; and the ill-judged sympathy she evinced encouraged the repetition of them. The weak and foolish mother was deeply offended that the son she adored should not be looked up to by his wife with the pride with which she regarded him, and by a wife who had brought not a guinea into the family, and who was, moreover, an Irish-woman.

To foment quarrels between the young pair, and to retain the exclusive confidence of her son, were the aim of Mrs. Hunter; but she had not sufficient tact to conceal from him the motive that actuated her; and he, having some portion of honesty and generosity in his nature, as well as no slight degree of the love of opposition, no sooner perceived her object than he felt strongly disposed to defeat it. To accomplish this end, he became more tractable toward his wife. He listened to her counsel, and by degrees seldom refused to follow it, until, step by step, Honor acquired so powerful an influence over him, that, no longer having cause for dissatisfaction with him, a perfect understanding became established between them, and love, founded on esteem and respect, sprang up in the heart of Mr. James Hunter for the woman he had married solely with the view to being amused by her.

He was himself surprised when he found that he preferred sitting for hours with her to making the daily round of all the horse-dealers' yards in the west-end of town, or frequenting the clubs and other resorts where he had been wont to go and meet his

acquaintances. He was delighted to drive her out in his cabriolet, or to walk with her in Kensington Gardens; and Honor, glad to observe the change she had effected in him, repaid him for it by affectionate treatment and increased consideration.

Mr. Hunter marked with equal surprise and satisfaction the wonderful improvement in his son, and attributed it to the true cause, namely, the influence of his daughter-in-law. He asked her to induce his son to give up the army, and to enter political life in a year or two, when he had still more profited by the instruction and study she had led him to seek. Mr. James yielded a ready assent, as, indeed, he now began to do to every suggestion of his wife; and, in proportion to the progress he attained in the rational tastes and pursuits she induced him to cultivate, did his love for her increase. She explained to him the ambitious views she had formed for him,—her desire to see him enter Parliament, and distinguish himself there; and he was pleased to find she thought sufficiently well of him to think him capable of fulfilling her wishes. "But we have both much lost time to make up for,

my dear James," would Honor say. "My education has not been what I could have wished; but it is never too late to learn, and I will study history and *belles lettres* with you. We will make ourselves proficients in geography and other useful sciences, and the only emulation between us shall be who will learn the most and the fastest."

"Ah, Honor, you already know so much more than I do, that I shall never be able to catch you; but, nevertheless, I will do my best, for you have made me anxious to justify your hopes of me; and I do begin to feel a great pleasure in learning things, my ignorance of which hitherto makes me now really ashamed."

"You know the old proverb, James, 'Self-taught, well-taught.' It now depends on us to prove it. No one need be ignorant who has a hearty good will to learn, and books within reach. Fancy how happy, how proud I should be, to hear you, some years hence, speak in Parliament on some grave subject: to see the attention and mark the silence of the house while you addressed it, to hear the cheers that followed the happy illustra-

tion of some argument advanced, or the talent with which you refuted some sophistry, and, above all, to see the delight of your good father at your success."

"I would study for years, Honor, to give you this pleasure; but so ignorant, so stupid, as I am, how can I hope to be ever capable of rising to distinction?"

"Many, very many, have done so, James, who began to learn much later than you, and had not, like you, a fellow-scholar in your studies."

"You can make me do anything, Honor, indeed you can, for I long to be worthy of you."

Hitherto, Mr. James Hunter, profuse and extravagant, expended all the money lavished on him by his parents solely on his own pleasures. Now, he would fain spend it in presents for his wife; but she checked him, and made him bestow it better. She could not, however, prevent him from taking on himself the payment of a handsome sum for the maintenance of her mother, nor from buying for her various useful gifts. In no manner could he have testified his love for his wife more agreeably to her than by this attention to her mother, and Honor, grate-

ful for it, devoted herself still more assiduously to render him all that could make him estimable. She discovered in him many qualities, the seeds of which had always existed, but which had never been developed owing to the abundance of weeds which had sprung up to choke them; and as she, day by day, eradicated those weeds, she beheld the seeds produce precious results, and blessed God for having enabled her to clear the soil, and turn it, by careful culture, from a wilderness to a garden.

A taste for study once taken is not easily laid aside, and more especially when it is shared by one who has a deep interest in keeping it alive. Mr. James Hunter's desire to learn grew with the progress he made, and even his wife was surprised and delighted to observe his perseverance, and the admirable results it produced.

The Hunter family removed from London to Wintern Abbey; and, when Mrs. James Hunter beheld the magnificence of that princely seat, she felt more than ever that its future owner should render himself eligible to do honour to such possessions, and for fulfilling the duties they entailed. Per-

fect happiness seemed now within the reach of this family; but, when did this blessing ever come without some alloy that tainted, if it did not empoison it? While every day elevated Honor in the opinion of her father-in-law, and increased the passionate love of her husband, the dislike and jealousy of her narrow-minded mother-in-law became stronger. Every word of commendation, every mark of esteem from Mr. Hunter towards her, envenomed the feelings of his wife, and the fond devotion of Mr. James Hunter to Honor blew the embers of ill-will into a flame of hatred no longer to be suppressed.

Mrs. James Hunter was pronounced to be in a state that promised to render her husband a father, a piece of intelligence which occasioned the utmost joy to father and son. The old gentleman, delighted at the prospect of becoming a grandfather, lavished gifts on Honor, while her husband seemed to live but in her presence. "Tell me, my dear child," said Mr. Hunter, "what can I do, what can I bestow, to give you pleasure on this good news? You have a mother, and I wish her to share my joy. She is, I have

only lately discovered, in less prosperous circumstances than the mother of such a daughter deserves to be. Suffer me to enable you to assure her, *from you*, an income adequate to her comfort, and let her receive it as a gift for her life. You and James have kept me in the dark about her position, else should the income now secured to her have been much sooner given. I owe you too much, my dear daughter, not to wish to pay, at least, a portion of my debt, and you must not refuse me the pleasure your acceptance of this gift will confer. This is to be a little secret between you, James, and myself."

The proud but generous spirit of Honor was melted by this proof of her father-in-law's affection; and she, for the first time, while tears of gratitude filled her eyes, threw herself into the extended arms of Mr. Hunter, and embraced him, while she murmured her thanks. He, too, much touched by her unusual emotion, held her for a moment to his breast, and pronounced a blessing on her head; when, at that very instant, the door of the chamber was flung open, and Mrs. Hunter, with a flushed face, and eyes flashing with anger, rushed into the room. "So, I

have caught you at last, madam," exclaimed she. "Are you not ashamed to be detected in wheedling and coaxing my husband, in order to cut me out, and get his money? You are a viper, a wicked, deceitful wretch, who thinks of nothing but turning my husband and son against me. A curse on all Irish women!" And here her rage overpowered her, and she dropped into a chair, scarcely able to breathe.

Mr. Hunter's indignation deprived him of the power of interrupting the torrent of reproaches to which his infuriated wife gave utterance; and Honor, pale as marble, though shocked beyond measure, drew up her stately figure to its utmost height, and, with the dignity of a queen, walked slowly from the room. Mr. Hunter attempted to support her, but she entreated him with calmness to remain where he was.

"Ah! treacherous wretch!" exclaimed the panting termagant, Mrs. Hunter, "you can be stately enough before me, but where was your stateliness when you were kissing my husband—your husband's father? Shame on you!"

Honor cast not a single glance at her mo-

ther-in-law, but walked to her own chamber, where, pouring out a glass of water, she drank a portion of its contents, and endeavoured to conquer her indignation and horror at the ignominious charges brought against her While she was yet agitated, her husband entered, and, greatly alarmed at the change in her aspect, anxiously inquired the cause.

"Nothing, my dear James," replied she, mastering her emotion; "I was only frightened by a mouse."

When Honor had left the room, Mr. Hunter approached his wife, and, looking at her with a sternness his countenance had never previously worn to her, exclaimed, "Woman! how dared you to insult the pure ears of my son's wife by the vile and infamous reproaches you presumed to address to her; and how dared you to insult my grey hairs by charges so utterly unfounded, that only the most corrupt mind could form, and the most audacious tongue express them?"

Awed by the severity of his words, and the sternness of his regard, Mrs. Hunter became immediately sobered from her temporary madness. She trembled violently, and ven-

tured to mutter something about her natural anger at seeing Mrs. James Hunter embracing her husband.

"Silence, woman!" said he, "your conduct is unpardonable: do not aggravate my just indignation by attempting to justify it!" And he left the room.

CHAPTER VI.

But, though the delicacy and prudence of Honor prevented her from even hinting to her husband the disgraceful scene which his mother had occasioned, that foolish woman had not perception enough to see the necessity of pursuing the same reserve. Having wept herself into a state of fever, she sent for her son, and, in terms of exaggeration, prompted more by her coarse conception of the affectionate familiarity she had witnessed between his father and wife, than by any desire of misrepresentation, recounted the cause of her violent anger.

"Stop, mother!" interrupted Mr. James Hunter, "you shock, you disgust me. This is no longer a fitting home for my wife. I feel it is not, when you, her mother-in-law,

who ought to respect her as the wife of your son, entertain suspicions the most vile against her principles, and hesitate not to attempt to turn her husband against her."

"I only say," replied the weeping mother, "that, ever since she entered my house, neither my husband nor my son values me as they did before; that she keeps me at as great distance as if I were a servant, instead of being her mother-in-law, and the mistress of this house. You, who I doted on, never come to sit with me and tell me all your grievances, as you used to do; and your father treats her as he would a queen, while I am neglected. What am I to think of her stateliness and coldness to him when I am present; yet, when I enter unexpectedly, I find her pressed to his breast with his arms around her, just as they used to be around me when we were first married."

"And as a father's arms might be around his daughter, or his son's wife," interrupted her son, angrily.

"And what vexed me the most," resumed Mrs. Hunter, "was, that neither of them seemed the least ashamed."

"And why should they?" demanded her

son, disdainfully. "Mother, mother, I blush for you; for I could not have imagined that a pure-minded woman could have for a moment entertained suspicions so utterly abominable."

"I had no worse suspicions than that your wife was coaxing her father-in-law for some purpose or other, probably either to get money or to thank him for having given it, or to turn him against me still more than she has already done."

"And these suspicions you seem to think lightly of? Oh! mother, how little do you know my wife! While you are insulting her with the grossest suspicions, she carefully concealed from me that anything disagreeable had occurred, so desirous was she that I should not know how ill you had behaved."

"Poor fellow! how easy it is to deceive you! How do you know that her silence on what happened was not caused by her fears that you would resent her shameful conduct with your father? I always hated the Irish, and since I have known her I hate them still more. But, I see it's useless to speak to you. You are bewitched and blinded — so you

are." And Mrs. Hunter's tears flowed afresh, while her son, angered almost beyond his power of endurance, left the room.

Honor had now recovered from the shock her nerves had sustained by the scene with her mother-in-law; and her husband, anxious not to renew the painful subject, abstained from informing her of the interview he had had with his mother. He felt, however, that similar scenes to the late might be renewed, now that he was aware of the absurd jealousy and dislike which Mrs. Hunter had conceived against her daughter-in-law,—a jealousy which no power of reasoning, with a woman so narrow-minded and prejudiced, could remove. Hence, he was extremely desirous to seek another home, that Honor, in her delicate state, should escape any further annoyance.

A summons from his father brought the young pair to his private room; and there, with a degree of regret and kindness that touched the hearts of both, he announced to them that the conviction that he was acting in the manner most likely to be conducive to their happiness had led him to bestow on them Merton Hall, a fine seat, not above

a dozen miles off, which he had lately purchased, and which he would forthwith have furnished according to his daughter-in-law's taste.

"I shall miss you, my dear children, very much," said the worthy man, sighing deeply, "for your presence here so greatly added to my enjoyment, that I would fain have kept you always with me. But this pleasure was not reserved for me, and I must console myself for your absence by seeing you both as often as you will let me, here, and at your own abode, where, with my daughter's permission, I mean to be a frequent visitor. You, dear Honor, will, I am sure, forgive the folly, the worse than folly, of your mother-in-law; and she will see her error, and atone for it, I am sure, before long. Never having had a daughter to share my affection with, she has been hitherto so accustomed to engross all my attention, that she cannot bear to have any portion of it diverted to where it was so natural it should be paid. Look over this foolish jealousy on her part, my dear daughter, originating in too strong an attachment to me and to her son."

The good feeling evinced by Honor on

this occasion made a deep impression on her husband's father as well as on himself; and when, a few hours after, won by the arguments and entreaties of Mr. Hunter, his wife sought Honor, to apologize for what had occurred, Honor showed so much forbearance, and such a desire to conciliate the old lady, that the latter confessed her error, and promised never more to offend. She even went so far as earnestly to solicit the continuance of her son and his wife in the paternal home, were it, as she urged, only to prove that they had pardoned her. But Mr. Hunter adhered to the project he had adopted of separate establishments, and she was compelled to acquiesce in his will, now truly sorry for her previous wilfulness and folly. To atone for it, in some degree, she took an active part in the preparations for fitting up Merton Hall, and, with a better taste than could be anticipated from her, carefully forbore to meddle in the instructions given to the best house-decorators and upholsterers in London, deferring in everything to the wishes of her daughter-in-law, and only reserving to herself the supplying of the rare Sevrès china, fine *buhl* and *marqueterie* ca-

binets, exquisite specimens of *cristal de roche*, and ancient *Limoges* of immense value, which were sent down from town.

All the preparations for the expected "young stranger," and the costly wardrobe for an *accouchée*, she insisted on paying for; and she made her peace with her husband by the generosity and good will she evinced for the comfort of the youthful pair. It became a frequent occupation for the *parti quarrée* to drive over and inspect the progress of the fitting-up of Merton Hall. Gardeners were busy in getting the pleasure-grounds and flower-knots into order; conservatories were springing up of the most tasteful forms; and hothouses were being built, in order to get them well stocked. It was a pleasant sight to see the celerity in the advancement of work which wealth can command, as hundreds of men worked all day to carry out the intentions of the owners of Merton Hall.

One of the first acquisitions the young pair wished to make to their new abode, was a fine library; and this Mr. Hunter commissioned one of the most intellectual and well informed of his friends to provide. Cases of books without end arrived to fill the shelves

arranged to receive them; and Honor and James promised themselves many a happy hour in the perusal of these treasures.

"I wish, Honor," said her husband, "that I could do something exclusively for your happiness in our new abode. Everything progresses, as if by the hand of enchantment, without my having anything left for me to do that could anticipate your wishes. Well, I must think of it; and who knows that, although not very bright, but something may suggest itself to me to surprise and please you?"

Whatever might be the plan that entered Mr. James Hunter's head, he, from that day forth, busied himself in seeing it carried into execution, but would not let his wife into the secret until his scheme was completed. The apartments where the operations were going on were kept locked; the cases of furniture that arrived for them were not allowed to be seen by any one but Mr. James and his workmen; and, after several weeks, Honor was promised to be let into the secret, as her husband called it. The promised day at length arrived; and James Hunter, taking the hand of his wife, led her to the wing of

the house to which she had hitherto been denied access. He drew the key of the ante-room, which led to the rooms, from his pocket, and, unlocking the door, admitted Honor into a suite of apartments, in the decoration and furnishing of which nothing conducive to elegance and comfort had been omitted. "Oh, what a delicious snuggery!" exclaimed Honor. "Never before did I see anything so tempting as these rooms."

They consisted of an ante-chamber, from which opened a small dining-room to the right, and a drawing-room to the left, the very pictures of cheerfulness and comfort. A bed-room and dressing-room, with a small bath-room beyond, communicated with the drawing-room, and adjoining these was a simple but very airy bed-room, and small sitting-room.

"I am charmed, but puzzled, dear James," said Honor, "to know for whom these most tempting rooms are designed? Had I not seen those intended for me I should have supposed that this wing was meant for a *sanctorum* for us when we were tired of the splendour of the apartments fitted up for us by your kind father."

"You would be wrong, then, dear Honor, for once. Guess again."

"I really can't."

"Did it never occur to you, my sweet Honor, that one thing was wanting to your happiness? I don't include the want of seeing me more rational, more worthy of you, for that is a want that I fear, with all my desire to improve, will long exist."

Honor smiled affectionately on him, and shook her head as she said, "You know very well, James, what I think on this point, and you are now only fishing for compliments."

"Well, Honor, as you can't guess, I must tell you. This wing is designed for your mother, and her faithful attendant, Judy, for I am too happy not to wish to have your mother made happy also, which I am sure she never can be away from you."

Honor's eyes filled with tears, and, throwing herself into the arms of her husband, she murmured her thanks.

"Dear, dear James, you have indeed anticipated the only wish I had left unfulfilled. How thoughtful, how kind of you! I have been longing to see my poor mother again, for I never knew how dear she was to me

until I had left her, and I have a long arrear of duty and affection to discharge to her for past neglect and disobedience."

"I have been thinking, dearest Honor, that you must long to see her; and, to confess the truth to you, I felt ashamed to propose returning to Ireland for that purpose, until the recollection of my follies when there had time to be forgotten. You have taught me to blush for those follies, and to wish to redeem them; and, I trust, should we ever visit Ireland again, I shall merit a better reputation than I left behind me there. Be assured, I will pay every attention to your mother when she comes to us, and leave nothing neglected to render her happy."

"Strange!" thought Honor, when he left her to superintend some work going on at the other side of the house; "how I begin to love my husband! And yet it is not strange; for I must be heartless and ungrateful indeed if I did not, so good and kind as he is, and so desirous to promote my happiness. When I look back on the past, on my levity, my want of discretion, and my elopement, I feel that I do not merit the felicity I possess. But the sense of my former unworthiness is

the strongest stimulant to redeem it; and fortunate, indeed, am I in having so good a nature as my husband's to work on, and carry out the task I have assigned myself of effecting his reformation as well as my own.

"With what tenderness do we turn to the being whom we have snatched from evil courses, in whom we have anchored the long-dormant sense of right and goodness! The feeling a mother experiences when she has eradicated the faults of a wilful child and rendered him worthy, may alone be compared to that which I feel on marking, every day, every hour, the happy change I have wrought in my husband. Yes, if I won him unfairly —and often do I blush at the recollection— I will at all events discharge the duties of a faithful wife, and so atone for my past faults. James was meant by nature to be good, and was only rendered selfish and unreasonable by the foolish indulgence of his mother, and weak compliance with her folly by his father. Let the task be mine to render him a useful and honourable member of society, and to watch over his welfare and happiness."

When Mr. Hunter proposed buying a house in London for the young pair, Honor earnestly

entreated him not to think of it, for, at least, some years. "James," said she, "has pledged himself to devote some time to serious studies, to fit him for entering Parliament with credit to himself. In the quiet of the country, where no interruption can break in on us, can this plan be best put into execution; while in London he might be tempted to fall into dissipation that would draw him from it. We will, with your permission, pay you an occasional, but short visit in London, and avoid the dangers of a protracted stay."

"Always wise, always thoughtful, my dear daughter," replied Mr. Hunter. "I feel my affection for my son increase more and more, as your estimable qualities are revealed to me, and your influence over him, never exercised but for his good, brought to light. You are, indeed, his Mentor, his guardian angel; and to you I shall owe the incalculable obligation of having transformed a wild youth into a sensible man."

Even Mrs. Hunter—the prejudiced and narrow-minded Mrs. Hunter—began, though by slow degrees, to render justice to her daughter-in-law; more especially as she felt that to her was due the respectful and affec-

tionate behaviour she now experienced from her son. He no longer addressed her as "Old girl," slapped her on the shoulders, or applied slang expressions to her, as had been formerly his wont; and although, at first, she rather regretted the want of this coarse familiarity, which she feared indicated a decrease of regard, she not only began to get reconciled to it, but to think it preferable to his former free-and-easy style of behaviour. Her jealousy of her daughter-in-law died away when she saw that Mr. Hunter was the first to propose that Mr. and Mrs. James should have a house of their own; nay, more, she now wished she had not rendered this step on his part necessary; for it would be more agreeable to her to see her son every day in the same house, than to have to drive twelve miles for an interview; so prone are weak and self-willed persons to deplore the results of their own folly and obstinacy.

CHAPTER VII.

The position of Mrs. O'Flaherty had greatly changed since her daughter had become the rich Mrs. James Hunter; and the frequent costly gifts forwarded for the old lady's use kept alive the admiration excited in the town of —— for the generous and affectionate conduct of Mrs. James Hunter to her mother; no proof of which, however trivial, failed to be circulated by our old acquaintance Judy, now transformed into Mrs. Judith. Attired in the habiliments suited to the confidential attendant of a highly-respectable lady, she took every opportunity afforded her of walking forth for the double purpose of displaying her rich mode cloak, her black silk bonnet, and nice sad-coloured silk gown, and of telling to all who would listen to her, the grand

and elegant presents contained in the last box sent from England by Mrs. James Hunter. And many were the listeners eager to collect the news Mrs. Judith had to recount; for, in a dull country town, where so little occurred to furnish subjects for gossiping, it was something to hear the tales that Judy had to tell; and though the wonderful luck, as it was termed, of Mrs. James, her mother, and Mrs. Judith, created not a little envy, still the curiosity to hear all particulars of the gifts was so keen that people were never tired of asking questions. "Indeed," would Mrs. Judith say, "for my part, I'm almost tired of getting presents, and so, I'm sure, is my mistress. *We* don't know what to wish for next, and *our* house is hardly large enough to hold all that is sent."

"You're a lucky woman, Mrs. Judith," would one of her cronies say. "Sure there is not in the whole town such an elegant mode cloak and bonnet as you've got on."

"Is it this cloak and bonnet you mean? Faith, and they are nothing to what I have at home, which are really so grand that I don't wear them for fear people might say I was proud. And, as for my mistress, she

might put on a new dress every day in the week, if she liked it, and of the best of velvets, satins, and silks; and no less than three *elegant Ingee* shawls, fit for the Lady Lieutenant herself. But I always was shure Miss Honor would come to be a great lady, though there used to be some people who doubted it, I know; but I have lived to see *my* words come to pass, and those who used to smile and shake their heads, when I said so, now find who was right and who was wrong. As for my mistress, shure never had any lady in the land such a dutiful and generous daughter. If you could see the beautiful gould watch, chain, and seals Mr. Hunter sent her, to wear by her side! Oh, such a watch! she has only to touch a spring, and off it goes, striking the hours, half-hours, and quarters, like a silver bell. I'm sure it must have cost a mint of money; but that's nothing to the other presents she's got."

Then Mrs. Judith would draw forth her purse, under some pretence, that her friends might see the silver and gold that shone through its silken meshes; draw off her gloves, that her rings might be noticed, and wish that "there were finer shops in the

town, where one might throw away a little money when one had too much."

Mrs. Judith frequently made an excuse for some trifling purchase to enter Miss White the milliner's shop, for the express purpose of vexing that person by the display of some new piece of finery, or the relation of the contents of some new box arrived from England. To pay for a yard of ribbon, her purse was produced and laid on the counter, Mrs. Judith affecting to search for some small coin, turning over crowns and guineas with an air of indifference, and referring to the last London fashions, with a look of affected pity, while glancing at the specimens of Dublin ones before her, until she almost maddened the spiteful and malicious spinster, who had formerly so often enraged her by speaking slightingly of her youthful mistress.

Mrs. O'Flaherty bore her sudden accession of prosperity with great equanimity. She only declared that "her daughter was the best of daughters," and wiped her eyes, and expressed her regret "that her poor dear husband had not lived to see what an excellent marriage Honor had made; though, to

be sure," as she never failed to add, "had he lived, he might have prevented the marriage, by not allowing Honor to walk out and make acquaintance with Mr. James Hunter; which, had she not done, matters would not have turned out so well; and, after all, as things now proved, Honor knew best what was for her own good."

Among the friends remembered with affectionate gratitude by Mrs. James Hunter, the Countess O'Neill and her grand-daughter stood pre-eminent. The change effected in Honor's character by reflection and ripened reason, taught her to appreciate far more highly than formerly their superiority over all her other friends. She remembered the judicious advice of the Countess, — advice which, probably, implanted the first seeds of goodness in her youthful heart; and the admirable example set her by Grace O'Neill, whose modesty, reserve, and decorous conduct had formed such a contrast to her own reckless wildness. She had written to the Countess O'Neill a letter so full of good feeling, so expressive of regret for former errors, and of a firm resolve to atone for them by future steadiness and propriety, that the

Countess, touched by it, had permitted Grace to write to her, as Honor had humbly requested. She herself also wrote to Honor, encouraging her to persevere in her good resolutions, and to justify the confidence she reposed in her, by the faithful discharge of her new duties. Frequent letters passed between them: those from Honor dictated by such good feeling that the Countess O'Neill and Grace rejoiced to find the happy change effected in her, and bestowed on her a regard and esteem they had formerly thought her too wild and giddy ever to merit.

"Honor's is, after all, a fine nature," would the Countess say to her grand-daughter, "for prosperity, instead of corrupting it, as is but too frequently the case, has brought forth its good qualities. I feel convinced that she—whom I thought an incorrigible, wild girl—will prove an excellent woman, and merit the esteem and respect of her husband's family."

Valuable tokens of Honor's affection were sent to the Countess and Grace, and they repaid them by unceasing kindness and attention to her mother, which they knew would be most acceptable to her. Indeed, Honor forgot no past kindness received from their

friends by her mother or herself, and costly presents to each and all of them proved that ingratitude was not among her sins. These proofs of her remembrance gratified her old friends so much that they induced an oblivion of her girlish levity and wildness in the minds of the good, while her riches covered, as charity is said to do, a multitude of sins in the opinions of the less worthy. Her former faults were now seldom referred to, or, if they were, were only named to prove how youthful errors can be atoned for by after good conduct. The rich Mrs. James Hunter was a very different person to the poor Honor O'Flaherty, and many were those who having formerly visited her errors with an unmitigated severity, now proclaimed that they had always foreseen what an excellent person she would turn out to be. Such is the magical influence which wealth possesses.

So well had Grace O'Neill fulfilled the resolution she had formed, of concealing, if she could not conquer, the attachment she had formed to Captain Mordant, that even her most intimate friends, who had suspected, from the frequency of his visits to the Countess, that an affection had sprung up between

him and her grand-daughter, admitted that they had been mistaken when they saw with what apparent calmness she bore his departure and supported his absence. Often was his name introduced purposely in her presence, that they might ascertain what effect it produced on her, so kindly can professed friends sometimes act; but Grace had prepared herself for these ordeals, and passed through them unmoved.

It may be doubted whether, with all her self-control and heroism, she could have so well sustained the part she had assigned herself had she not been so devotedly attached to her grandmother, and so thoroughly convinced that the happiness of that excellent woman would be seriously impaired, if not wholly destroyed, by a belief that her darling child was suffering the pangs of disappointed affection. Frequently did she catch the searching eyes of the Countess fixed on her face with a mingled expression of alarm and pity that revealed her fears and suspicions, and to banish both became the object of her thoughts. "No," would Grace say to herself, in the solitude of her own chamber, when sleep—as was often the case—deigned not to

visit her pillow, "whatever pain I endure my dear grandmother shall never know it—shall never have to reproach herself, as I am sure she would do, were she to see the traces of sadness on my face for having allowed *him*, whom I cannot chase from my heart, the opportunity of having lodged his image there for ever. Never shall my acquaintance know that I loved one who could leave me without justifying my tenderness for him by the avowal of his own."

Grace permitted no hour to pass without its finding her occupied. She constantly read aloud to her grandmother, made drawings, and embroidered, applied herself to her music more assiduously than at any former time, and carefully avoided during the day to let her thoughts wander to past and happier hours, and to him who constituted their happiness. And she was rewarded for her heroism, by finding that, although Mordant was still fondly remembered, it was no longer with the bitterness of disappointment and regret that had tortured her during the first days of his absence. Perhaps the word heroism may be deemed too strong, or misap-

plied, to the case of Grace O'Neill, by many female readers, who are prone to think that the term should only be used to express great personal sacrifices, or a total abnegation of self. But let them be assured that it is not by one desperate sacrifice that heroism is best proved, but by the continual and calm exercise of a self-control, the cost of which to her who practises it can only be judged by those who have themselves had courage to exert it, and to assume smiles while the heart was torn with anguish.

The Countess O'Neill was not wholly deceived by the calmness of her grand-daughter. The scene that had occurred the night after Mordant's farewell had too well proved to her how deeply Grace's affections were engaged; but she blessed the courage which enabled her darling to bear up against the heavy trial to which she had been exposed, and valued her more highly for it. The name of Mordant was never mentioned by either, though often thought of by both; and the good opinion they mutually continued to entertain of him, despite the apparent inconsistency of his conduct, formed a secret bond

of sympathy between them ,which drew them more fondly to each other, even though the sympathy was not expressed.

At a dinner party given by Mr. and Mrs. Mac Vigors, to which the Countess and her grand-daughter went, much against their inclinations, to oblige Mrs. Mac Vigors and the Fitzgerald family, who had made a point of their going, a Captain Wynyard was presented to Grace, and handed her to dinner. He was a talkative if not an agreeable man; and, as he addressed his conversation chiefly to Grace, he prevented her thoughts from reverting to former times, when many of the persons then present had met at different dinners in the neighbourhood, and Mordant had occupied the place by her side now filled by Captain Wynyard. "I like Ireland extremely," observed the latter. "I was sure I should, for a friend of mine, an officer in the regiment which preceded mine at ——, spoke of it in very high terms for the hospitality of its gentry, and the beauty of its ladies. Did you happen to know my friend?" inquired Captain Wynyard, "his name is Herbert Vernon."

"Yes," replied Grace, "I had the pleasure of his acquaintance."

"By-the-bye, I suspect he lost his heart to a fair lady in ——, or its vicinity, who rejected him. Indeed, he admitted as much to me when we met in London, a short time ago, and I, who did not then dream of being sent to Ireland, never inquired the name of the lady, though now, finding myself in the same quarters where he met her, I should like extremely to know her, for Herbert Vernon is a man of no ordinary taste, and could only select a person worthy of him. I was called back to my regiment from London at a few hours' notice, left it without seeing Vernon again, and was marched off to my present station. Do you, Miss O'Neill, happen to know the lady who rejected Vernon?"

Grace felt a momentary embarrassment, but answered, as carelessly as she could, that she did not, thinking that, if ever an untruth could be pardonable, it was in the present instance.

"I have had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of several very pretty young ladies at ——," resumed Captain Wynyard,

"nevertheless, I have not, before to-day, found among them any one whom I should think likely to satisfy the fastidious taste of Herbert Vernon:" and he looked archly at Grace. "Are you quite sure, Miss O'Neill, that *you* don't know the lady in question?"

Grace looked grave, and answered, "No."

"I shall soon discover her," said Captain Wynyard; "for Vernon told me that a cousin of mine was also desperately smitten with the same lady, and, as he is stationed at Cork, I intend writing to ask him to get leave, and come and pay me a visit here, that he may present me to his acquaintances."

Grace's heart fluttered, and she felt the blood mount to her cheek; but, as no answer was needed, she spoke not.

"Probably, my cousin had the honour of being known to you? His name is Mordant."

"Yes, "I knew Captain Mordant," replied Grace, with as much indifference as she could assume; but her heightened colour did not escape the observation of Captain Wynyard, who, archly smiling, said, "I really suspect that I could now guess who the cruel lady is that sent Herbert Vernon back to

England half broken-hearted, and captivated my cousin."

Grace affected not to hear the last words, and addressed herself to the person who sat next her on the other side.

CHAPTER VIII.

"WHAT a handsome man Captain Wynyard is!" observed Mrs. Mac Vigors. "Did it strike you, Grace, that he bears a strong resemblance to Captain Mordant?"

"I did not remark it," was the reply.

"He is not so handsome nor so *distingué* looking," said Mrs. Mac Vigors. "I must admit, nevertheless, there certainly is a likeness. There are more good-looking officers in the regiment now quartered at —— than in that which preceded it, although not one of them is as handsome and *comme il faut* as Captain Mordant," resumed the hostess; "and I hear there are some marrying men amongst them—men, too, with good fortunes;" and the speaker sighed as if she regretted not having waited to try her chance

with the new regiment, instead of having accepted Mr. Mac Vigors.

"I was sorry," observed the Countess O'Neill, anxious to change the subject, "not to meet Lady Travers here to-day."

"Poor thing! she goes nowhere," replied Lady Fitzgerald. "Sir Henry is so fearful of any accident, that he will not allow her to leave her sofa; and I am really apprehensive that such close confinement will injure her health."

"If he would sometimes leave her, things would not be so bad," observed Mrs. Mac Vigors, "for then she could have a decent dinner in peace, and walk about the house; but he seems to think that *he* must keep at home as well as her; and he reminds me of the bird who watches over the nest, and who is ready to replace his mate, should she forsake the nest, and perform her duty."

"Kate, my dear," said Lady Fitzgerald, gravely.

"But you know, mamma, Sir Henry Travers is insupportable with his absurd notions, which have not even the merit of originality, as they are those laid down by his 'revered mother,' as he always calls the old lady, who

was one of the most eccentric and tiresome women in the world."

"But your sister, my dear, is very happy," said Lady Fitzgerald, deprecatingly.

"As happy as a slave can be who is not permitted to eat when she is hungry, to drink when she is thirsty, to walk or drive when she requires exercise, and, above all, who is doomed to see all day her fidgetty husband, who thinks the safety of his future heir, or heiress, of much greater importance than the health of his unfortunate wife, and who lays down the law, not of common sense, but of his 'revered mother.'"

Lady Fitzgerald, who wished to have her friends believe that her daughters were the most enviable women in the world, cast many deprecatory glances at Mrs. Mac Vigors to deter her from exposing the conjugal infelicity of Lady Travers, but vain were these glances; and she was almost driven to despair, when, happily, the entrance of the gentlemen from the dining-room prevented the continuance of the subject. Captain Wynyard approached the Countess O'Neill, and spoke to her of his friend, Herbert Vernon. She admitted all the good qualities for which he gave him

credit, and mentioned that she thought so well of him that she regretted his departure when he left."

"I believe he had the honour of seeing you frequently, madam," said Captain Wynyard.

"Yes," replied the Countess, unsuspicious of the motive of the question.

"I can no longer feel surprised that with this privilege he should have liked —— so much," resumed Captain Wynyard. "He lost his heart, I know," continued the speaker "when he was quartered at ——."

The Countess felt embarrassed, and, like her grand-daughter, endeavoured to change the subject, which only served to convince Captain Wynyard that the object of Vernon's passion was no other than Grace O'Neill.

Vernon and a cousin of mine, Mordant—the modern Pylades and Orestes,—were both smitten by the charms of the same lady," observed the speaker. The Countess remained silent. "You were, perhaps, not aware of this fact, madam?"

"At my age, sir," replied the Countess, coldly, "ladies do not take much interest in

the tender passions of the young gentlemen of their acquaintance."

"By Jove, I have hit the truth," thought Captain Wynyard, putting his glass to his eye, and taking a long look at Grace O'Neill, who was seated at the other side of the room; "and I cannot wonder that my friends were enamoured, for I never saw a more lovely girl, or one with an air more *distingué*."

He left the Countess O'Neill soon after, and advanced to the group of young girls, among whom her grand-daughter was seated, hoping to enter into conversation with her: but Grace defeated his intention by devoting all her attention to one of the ladies seated next her, much to his annoyance; and so pertinaciously did she adhere to her purpose of avoiding him, that for the rest of the evening he had no opportunity of speaking to her. His questions had embarrassed and annoyed her, as they had done her grandmother; and the reference to Mordant had awakened painful feelings, which had clouded the cheerfulness she was so desirous to maintain in society. Captain Wynyard was not

however, a man to be easily rebuffed, more especially when he wanted to ascertain anything that interested him. He was of a prying disposition, without much mental resource, and, like all such, was never more happy than when searching to discover the secrets and affairs of his acquaintances. Finding that he could extract nothing from the Countess O'Neill and her grand-daughter, he next addressed his questions to Mrs. Mac Vigors.

"A friend of mine, Mr. Herbert Vernon, an officer in the regiment that preceded mine in my present quarters, was desperately in love with Miss O'Neill, I believe," said he.

"Very likely," was the reply. "Every one must admire her."

"But Herbert Vernon did more than admire her; he proposed for her."

"I was not aware of it, though nothing could be more, natural, for Miss O'Neill possesses every quality to win admiration and ensure respect."

"Herbert Vernon is so good a *parti* that few women in England, with disengaged

hearts, would be likely to refuse him; so I conclude Miss O'Neill preferred some other admirer."

"I am not at all in her confidence."

"I have heard that my cousin, Mordant was greatly smitten with her."

"Very probably, as he had opportunities of seeing her often, he being an especial favourite with the Countess O'Neill, her grandmother."

"Poor Mordant," observed Captain Wynyard, "is not so happily placed, nor so free to follow his own inclinations, as Herbert Vernon, who is an only son, doted on by his parents, who are extremely rich, and who would not, on any account, cross his will and pleasure. Mordant's father is not rich though his elder brother, who married an heiress, is; and Lady Mordant, his mother, is one of the most self-willed and ambitious women I know, and devoted to play. She would not hear of Mordant's marrying any woman who was not very rich and of noble birth."

"In fact, she wishes to *sell* her son to the highest bidder, and not to *marry* him to the

object of his choice. Is it not so?" observed Mrs. Mac Vigors.

"Precisely; and nothing can be more unfortunate for the happiness of Mordant, who is one of the most romantic fellows alive, and who would be perfectly content with love in a cottage, provided *la dame de ses pensées* was all that his fastidious taste could desire. If I know him as well as I fancy I do, I am sure he never will marry for money. Lady Mordant, however, hopes to persuade him to take this step, and never hears of an heiress of 'high degree' without thinking of marrying her to Mordant *nolens volens*, who avoids home as much as he can on this account. He will, therefore, poor fellow, probably live and die a bachelor, although no man is better calculated for domestic life."

"We all liked Captain Mordant extremely," said Mrs. Mac Vigors, "and shall be very glad to see him again."

"I intend to write and ask him to come back to his old quarters, and pay me a visit."

"I hope he will accept your invitation," said the lady: and the carriages of her

visitors being then announced, the party broke up.

The following day, Captain Wynyard called on the Countess O'Neill, but was not admitted to her presence. He had made up his mind to cultivate her acquaintance and that of her grand-daughter, for the sake of establishing an agreeable lounge, where he could while away an hour or two daily, and bestow his tediousness on them. The house of the Countess, he had sense enough to perceive, was the most *comme il faut* in the town, and the ladies of it the most *distinguées* (two words he frequently used); and he, deeming it perfectly natural that they could not be otherwise than charmed with his society, felt somewhat offended at not being received by them. "It would be charming," thought he, "that I should be the only one of the regiment admitted; it would make my brother officers so envious and jealous, for they always desire most to know those who least wish to know them. I'll never introduce one of them to the Countess O'Neill, or her beautiful grand-daughter, I can tell them, but keep that house wholly to myself."

The following day Captain Wynyard addressed the following letter to Mordant ;—

" Here I am, my dear Mordant, in your late quarters, where I find you enjoy a well-merited popularity, which I am desirous to turn to account in my favour. Come here, then, and pay me a visit, and, like a good cousin, get me an *entrée* to every pleasant house in the neighbourhood, and speak so well of me as to gain the good will of their owners. I dined out the day before yesterday at a certain Squire Mac Vigor's—a true specimen of the Hibernian breed. Hospitable, good-natured, and jolly, and as unsparing of his claret—which, *entre nous*, is perfect—as if it were water. His wife is more civilized than the generality of Irish ladies, owing to having passed many seasons in London, of which distinction she is not a little proud.

" At their house I met a Countess O'Neill, with a grand-daughter of surpassing loveliness, and as calm, reserved, and well-bred as if—help me to a comparison, or don't be offended at the only one that presents itself to my mind—as if she were *not* Irish. Those

of the gentle sex with whom I have formed acquaintance here, may possess all manner of *agrémens* and virtues, but are too demonstrative in manners to suit my taste. There is a restlessness about them, a flutter, a desire to please, that rather defeats its object. They are too glad to see one, shake hands too cordially, smile too frequently, and laugh too naturally, not to shock a man accustomed to the perfect *nonchalance* of our countrywomen towards their male acquaintances. The Countess O'Neill is an exception. She, like her grand-daughter, has none of the defects of her compatriots; for there is a certain degree of dignity and reserve about these ladies which, while it never violates the invincible fence which separates high breeding from an insolent *hauteur*, permits not the slightest approach to familiarity.

"How did your heart escape being captured by this beautiful girl? Let me into the secret, my good coz, for it will be one worth knowing if, as I hope, I may often find myself exposed to the dangerous pleasure of meeting her. I saw our friend, Herbert Vernon, in London a short time ago, when I little dreamed I was to take up his

late quarters. He told me *he* had left his heart in Ireland; and I would lay a wager Miss O'Neill is the lady in whose custody he left it! If you do not come and pay me a visit here, I shall be convinced that my suspicions that you, too, my dear coz, were desperately smitten with Miss O'Neill, are true, and that you dare not trust yourself again in her presence. What a strange land is this! Such a mixture of inconsistencies. The men full of talent, but wanting good sense. The women handsome, but too natural: they trust too much to *la belle nature*, and too little to art, without the aid of which beauty itself, even of the highest order, is, in my opinion, like admirable materials for an excellent dinner, without a good cook to turn them to proper account.

"Good-bye, my dear Mordant. Let me see you soon, and believe me always sincerely yours,

"FREDERICK WYNYARD."

"Just like him!" exclaimed Mordant, when, having perused his cousin's letter, he threw it down. "Always prying into the affairs of others, and so destitute of tact

with all his pretensions to it, as never to discover how disagreeable his curiosity renders him to his acquaintances. Yet what a temptation does he hold out to me! To have a good excuse for going for a few days to ——, for seeing her who is dearer to me than life, is what I have ardently desired ever since I came here. Shall I, now it is offered, avail myself of it? I feel my heart beat more rapidly at the very thought of beholding her again,—of looking once more into those deep and lustrous eyes, until their snowy lids droop to veil them from my too passionate gaze, and the heightened rose of her delicate cheeks reveals to me an emotion which indicates that I am less coldly regarded by her than are other men. Oh! the delight of hearing that low and dulcet voice again; pressing for a brief moment that small and dimpled hand within mine, and of feeling it flutter like some timid little bird in its prison! But it must not be. I dare not again expose myself to the danger of beholding her. I dare not meet the disapproving glance of the estimable Countess O'Neill in reproach for again troubling the repose of her grand-daughter. That fellow

Wynyard, too, with his indefatigable curiosity, would soon discover the state of my feelings, and, with his want of tact and well-known indiscretion, would not fail to expose them. No, I must not go to ——. It would only make me more wretched, more dissatisfied with my fate!

"The miser, whose whole sordid heart is filled with the love of gold, and who sees before him heaps of the glittering ore which never can be his, would feel less miserable than I should do on beholding that exquisite, that faultless being on whom my soul dotes, with the heart-rending conviction that she never can be mine. Would that I had never seen her! And yet let me recall the wish, for, had I never beheld her, I should for ever remain ignorant of the perfection which the Almighty can bestow on the choicest of *His* works, when to the rarest of personal beauty *He* adds the heavenly gift of mind! It will be some comfort to hear of her often through Wynyard. Nevertheless, he is so utterly incapable of truly appreciating a creature like Grace, that his remarks relative to her will seem to sully her purity, as hands exposed to rude toil are apt

to leave a soil on the brightness of any object they touch, or as an unclean glass taken from the sparkling wine it contains a portion of its pristine hue. I should like to hear Grace spoken, or written of, only by those who comprehend her superiority — mental and personal—over all other women, for the comments of ordinary minds on what is so matchlessly pure, soils, as the passage of flies over the whitest marble leaves stains behind. If I know the Countess O'Neill and her grand-daughter, as I believe I do, they will neither of them tolerate Wynyard, nor will I solicit their toleration of him, however he may be offended by my refusal."

CHAPTER IX.

THE return of post brought Captain Wynyard the expected answer from Mordant. "I cannot, my dear fellow," wrote he, "pay you a visit at ——. To avoid exciting your curiosity by any mystery, I will at once deal frankly with you, by stating that I *did* lose my heart to Miss O'Neill; and, as you know my exact position, and the views of my family,—views to which, although I never intend to yield,—I nevertheless don't mean to draw the anger of my mother on myself, by seeking to win her consent or that of my father to a union which would make the happiness of my life, could I but hope to attain Miss O'Neill's hand. Well aware of the result which an appeal to my mother would produce—a result which would in-

evitably expose the Countess O'Neill and her grand-daughter to an insult, I should never pardon myself for having drawn down on them—I left —— without soliciting the hand I would give worlds to possess. I have no reason to think that any such solicitation from me would have been accepted by the Countess, or her grand-daughter. Could I have hoped it might, perhaps I should have had less prudence.

"Now, my dear Wynyard, you know my secret, and I expect you will not abuse my confidence. The same feelings which prevent my going to —— also preclude me from addressing the Countess O'Neill in your favour. But, there will be no need of my intervention. Your own merits cannot fail to ensure you a good reception when you are once known; and I doubt not in a short time to hear that you are an established *ami de la maison* in every house you visit. Only, my dear coz, do not be indiscreet when you talk of me. Do not reveal my feelings, plans, nor affairs even, which I greatly doubt, if any one at —— should feel any interest about them."

"He is right, I dare say," observed Captain Wynyard. "When people get to know me better here, I shall not have a spare moment on my hands; I shall know every one, and every one's affairs, and that will amuse me, and give me something to talk about at the mess, and make my brother officers envious. They are always surprised how I can find everything out, while I think there is nothing so simple. What were eyes given for but to see, ears but to hear, and a tongue but to ask questions? and, while a man possesses these organs for acquiring information, I don't see why he should not know everything. Mordant must have his own reasons for not sending me letters of recommendation here. But I'll find them out, I can tell him; for I'm seldom defeated when I set to work to find out anything. I have no idea of people making mysteries or concealments with me, and, when they do it, it only whets my curiosity to discover them."

Determined to gain admittance to the presence of the Countess O'Neill, and doubtful of being let in unless he devised some scheme to effect it, Captain Wynyard wrote

a note to the Countess, requesting she would name an hour for receiving him, as he had a communication to make to her.

"What can this troublesome man mean?" said she, showing the note to her granddaughter.

A bright blush mounted to the cheek of Grace as her eyes glanced over it, and her heart beat quicker. Could it be that Mordant had employed his cousin to make any communication to her grandmother; and, if so, on what subject could it be? If it should relate to her—and her heart whispered it might be thus—how strange that he did not write direct to her grandmother, instead of through the medium of an individual of whom they knew so little, and did not wish to know more. "Yes, it was odd," thought Grace, "very odd;" nevertheless, extraordinary as it seemed, it agitated and unsettled her.

"I suppose I must see him," said the Countess O'Neill. "It would be uncivil to refuse; so write two or three lines, Grace, to name a time. Let it be to-morrow at three o'clock; for, if one is to be bored, the sooner it is over the better."

The Countess had noticed the blushes on her grand-daughter's cheeks when she perused the note, and, with all a woman's quickness of apprehension in matters of feeling, had divined the cause. "Dear, dear girl!" thought she, "the wound is not yet healed, though she so bravely conceals it! How I love her for the feminine pride and delicacy, which have enabled her to bear up against this first trial of the heart, and to hide her sufferings! I thought it was so, dear girl, skilfully as she has endeavoured to keep me in ignorance of her chagrin — a chagrin for which I must ever reproach myself as the cause, for having allowed Mordant such constant access to her society. She thinks, dear artless creature, that the communication which this cousin of Mordant says he has to make must relate to *him*, but I well know it is not the least likely; for the only letter I have received from Mordant, since his departure, I answered in a manner that must prohibit future ones; and Mordant is not a man to break through my restriction, unless he found himself at liberty to solicit the hand of my darling, and, in that case he would write to me direct, or come here."

Grace thought of nothing during the remainder of the day but the expected communication. She was absent and silent, as her grandmother observed with pain, although she forbore to refer to the fact; and sleep was almost a stranger to her pillow for the night. She wondered whether or not her grandmother would permit her to be present at the interview with Captain Wynyard; yet she had not courage even to hint an inquiry. No, she would act just as usual, and wait her grandmother's instructions on the subject.

Shortly after three o'clock, Captain Wynyard made his appearance, and, instead of referring to the alleged excuse for his visit, he talked of various other matters. "What a charming abode!" observed he, glancing around. "Ah! this fine garden," and he looked at it through the back windows of the room, "explains why I never see Miss O'Neill out walking. She, of course, takes her exercise in it. A great resource! You, ladies, I perceive, are fond of flowers," and he examined the old china vases filled with them that decorated the room. "I, too, am very partial to flowers. Perhaps, one day,

you will permit me to walk in your charming garden. I should so like it! Have you seen Mrs. Mac Vigors since I had the happiness of meeting you there? A very agreeable party, very, indeed."

Tired of his remarks, the Countess O'Neill said, "You stated, sir, in your note, that you had a communication to make to me."

"O! yes, very true, very true. In your charming society, ladies, I really had quite forgotten the circumstance, and I have to thank you, madam, for recalling it to my mind. The fact is, I have received a letter from my cousin, Mordant," (how rapidly the heart of Grace beat, and how beautiful was the colour on her cheek!) "and he charged me to pay my respects to you, ladies, and to offer to you his best wishes for your health and happiness, in which, I need not add, he takes the liveliest interest."

"Captain Mordant is very good to recollect his acquaintances at ——," replied the Countess O'Neill, with great formality of manner; "when you write to him, offer in return our compliments." She hoped that her reserve would induce an abridgment of a visit which she thought had already been

longer than was necessary; but Captain Wynyard, who had marked the stately reserve of his reception, began to suspect he might not again be admitted, and therefore resolved not to be got rid of so easily as the ladies might wish.

"And am I not to have the honour of being charged with any message for my cousin from you, Miss O'Neill?" said he, addressing himself to Grace.

"Pray offer him my compliments," was her answer.

"Poor Mordant is an excellent fellow, a very excellent fellow," observed Captain Wynyard, "and a very accomplished man, too. I understand he had the honour and happiness of being frequently admitted to your presence, ladies,—a privilege which all who have once entered it must envy him."

The Countess remained silent, as did Grace; and one of those awkward pauses ensued which are so well calculated to prove to a stranger that the continuance of his visit will afford no satisfaction to his host, or hostess. But Captain Wynyard was not a man to be made sensible of this fact by such indications, or, if he were, he evinced no

symptom of an intention of taking his departure.

"Poor Mordant!" said he, "is very painfully situated" (Grace turned pale, and then red, while her grandmother maintained an air of perfect indifference); "yes, very painfully situated;" resumed the speaker. "His father's estates being all entailed on the eldest son, Lord Fitz-Mordant, poor Mordant has only the scanty portion of a *cadet de famille*, which must always prevent his marrying according to his own wishes; and his mother, who governs her lord, has made up her mind never to receive any daughter-in-law who is not of noble birth, and possessed of a very large fortune."

How poor Grace's heart trembled! and yet there was something like comfort in the revelation made by the indiscreet Wynyard, for it explained *why* Mordant had not sought her hand.

"Now, Mordant," continued his gossipping cousin, "of all the men I ever knew, is the very last ever to marry for money. Simple in his tastes, and peculiarly formed for domestic life, a modest competency, a sort of love-in-a-cottage life, would perfectly satisfy

his wishes. He is, however, so good a son that he would, I am well convinced, sacrifice his own happiness rather than destroy that of his mother, who has set her heart on seeing him married to some noble heiress, which she, however, never will see; for, though Mordant won't marry *against* her consent, he will not marry for money."

How eagerly did Grace O'Neill listen to every word of this speech, although she appeared indifferent to it, and how did it enlighten her on what had hitherto appeared so incomprehensible! Mordant was no longer blameable in her eyes. He was the victim of circumstances over which, it was now clear, he had no control; and if, aware of this, he might be censured for risking the happiness of another by winning her affection, did he not also compromise *his own?* And what woman is there who will not be ready to pardon a folly originating in a passion occasioned by her own attractions? It was wrong, Grace knew, to come day after day into her presence—to betray in every glance, in every intonation of his voice, the love his lips never confirmed; but had he not, in the earlier part of their acquaintance, when he

first discovered his own danger, remained away, and tried to avoid her; and could he be blamed if the task he had set himself was too difficult, too much beyond his strength to fulfil, and he returned to an attraction which, as the needle is drawn by the magnet—as the moth to the flame that consumes it—he could not resist?

Mordant, hitherto the object of her love—a love which not even her pride could conquer—was now become the object of her tenderest pity—her deepest sympathy. An insufferable weight seemed to be removed from her heart, for henceforth she could think of him without humiliation, without any other sentiment than regret for the cruel circumstances that interposed to preclude his happiness and her own; and she could have thanked Wynyard with all her soul for having revealed to her the truth. *Now*, *he* might talk for hours on this subject without her thinking he said too much, or stayed too long. Her feelings towards him were totally changed. He was no longer a gossipping bore, as she had considered him heretofore; nay, more, she now thought him an agreeable and a well-disposed man, whom she should

like to see often, provided, always, that he made Mordant the sole subject of his conversation. Not such were the sentiments of her grandmother, who aware of the effect likely to be produced on Grace by the indiscreet disclosures of Mordant's *bavard* cousin, listened to him with ill-disguised displeasure, and assumed an appearance of such perfect indifference as might well have checked his imprudent confidence.

"Don't you pity poor Mordant, madam?" said Wynyard to the Countess.

"Why, as Captain Mordant is, and I suppose has long been, aware of his own position, and, consequently, can guard against forming any attachment not likely to be approved by his mother, I cannot think him an object entitled to pity; for he must be weak, and culpable indeed, if, under his circumstances, he exposed his own heart, or that of another, to the certain misery of a hopeless affection."

"But, if he chanced to meet a lady exactly suited to his taste, whose charms captivated him, whose mind and manners precisely realized the *fair ideal* his fancy had formed, could you be so cruel as to condemn him if

his heart became a prey to love, to love without hope?"

"No; provided he had not directly or indirectly sought to inspire a reciprocal passion in the object of his affection."

"You, Miss O'Neill, would, I hope, judge such a case more leniently."

"Never having thought on any such, I am by no means competent to decide," replied Grace; but her mild and beautiful countenance indicated that such a lover as Captain Wynyard hypothetically brought forward would find no harsh or unmerciful judge in her.

At length Captain Wynyard took his leave, so much to the satisfaction of the Countess O'Neill, that the door had hardly closed after him when she declared her hope of seeing him no more. "It is quite evident," said she, "that he used his cousin's name without being authorized by him, and solely for the purpose of gaining admission here; a piece of impertinence I cannot tolerate, and which, I am sure, Captain Mordant would highly disapprove. Don't you think him insupportable, my dear?"

The question brought rosy blushes to the

the cheeks of Grace; she hesitated, looked embarrassed, and, after a moment's pause, answered,

"No, not absolutely disagreeable, that is, not so *very* disagreeable as I at first thought him; although he certainly cannot be considered pleasant."

"Poor darling child," thought the Countess; "the visit of this *bavard* will set her brain thinking and her heart throbbing. She will apply every word of the hypothesis he, with such bad taste and want of tact, brought forward to the peculiar case of Mordant; and in the blighted lover there will be nothing to keep alive feminine pride, that safety-valve to woman's heart; while there will be much to awaken pity, one of the most successful allies love can enlist in his cause. I wish this indiscreet man had not come here, and I must take means to prevent his being again admitted."

For the remainder of the day Grace was often *distraite*, yet an expression of serenity and sweetness might be noticed in her countenance that lent it a peculiar beauty; and well did the fond eyes of her grandmother remark the change while she divined the cause."

"Why," thought she, "did Mordant's position interpose a barrier between them? He was so good, so amiable, that I should have died happy could I have placed her destiny in his hands; and when shall I see another in whom I could repose such confidence?"

CHAPTER X.

"I AM afraid," thought Captain Wynyard, as the door of the Countess O'Neill closed after him, "that I have not much chance of establishing any intimacy in that quarter. The old lady cooled my courage most wonderfully by her freezing reception; and when, with her formal air, she inquired about the communication I had to make her, I was so taken by surprise, having forgotten the whole got-up tale, that I am sure she must have suspected it was a mere excuse to gain an *entrée* there. For a few minutes, I nearly broke down—a rare thing for me; but her stately air and cold stern eyes abashed me. One thing, however, I have discovered, and that is, that the grand-daughter has not forgotten my cousin, Mordant. I'd lay a large wager that he has made an impression on *her*

heart that will not be soon be effaced; and it is evident the old lady is very sore on the subject.

"Mordant ought to be devilishly obliged to me, I can tell him, for pleading his cause so well! And yet I dare be sworn that, with the usual ingratitude of mankind, he'd be in a devil of a rage if he knew all I said, ay, or even a quarter of it. The girl—and a beautiful creature she is—was not sorry to hear what I insinuated, rather than said, about his position and its result. Her fine eyes shot forth a momentary radiance that brightened her whole face; and I never saw a more brilliant hue of rose than that which bespread her cheeks when I made her comprehend his feelings. Pretty creature! I dare say *she* would not be sorry to receive a visit from me occasionally, that she might hear of Mordant. The old lady looked devilishly put out of her way while I was making out a case for him; but *n'importe*, I have done him a service in spite of her, ay, and of him, too, who begged me so earnestly *not* to speak of him, nor of his affairs, to these ladies. Had he really made me his *confidant*,—placed a perfect, an *unreserved* trust in me,—I might, perhaps, have obeyed

his injunctions; but, as he did not, my conscience is safe; and, after all, I don't see the good of concealments at any time, and more especially when what one *has* got to say can make a lovely girl brighten into increased beauty, as half-blown roses do in sunshine.

"I must, however, make our fellows of the regiment believe that I can go as often as I like to visit the Countess O'Neill—that I am on the most friendly footing there,—just to excite their envy. My cousin is a lucky dog to have won the heart of such a girl as Miss O'Neill, though he, with his romantic notions, only makes himself miserable. Were I in his place I'd propose to her at once, and leave my ambitious mamma to rant and rage as much as she pleased. It's an absurdity for sons and daughters to sacrifice their happiness to please their parents! We don't come into the world by our own will, or pleasure; and why the deuce should we think of theirs when our own feelings are in question? This is *my* notion; but Mordant would be shocked at it, and will remain a bachelor to prevent his mother being vexed: more fool he!"

That day, at the mess dinner, Wynyard

failed not to mention the long visit he had paid to the Countess O'Neill and her granddaughter.

"Come, come, tell us all about the young lady?" inquired one of his brother officers."

"Ay, do, Wynyard," said another. "Is she really as handsome as people say?"

"Is she not more than painting can express, or youthful poets fancy when they love?" said Wynyard, bombastically. "Miss O'Neill really is one of the most beautiful girls I ever saw! Not a rustic, hoydenish sort of beauty, but a perfectly aristocratic one—calm, dignified, and *distinguée*."

"Has she got much to say for herself?" demanded another officer. "The Irishwomen are said to be free and easy in their manners, and disposed to be garrulous."

"Miss O'Neill is precisely the reverse, and in the best society in England might pass for the most thorough-bred girl in the room."

"When will you present me?" "And me?" "And me?" exclaimed three or four other young men.

"'Ay, there's the rub!' I'm very sorry, *mais, que voulez-vous, mes amis?* The Countess O'Neill, anticipating, I suppose, some

such request, has strictly prohibited my making it. 'I shall be glad to see you, Captain Wynyard,' said she, 'whenever you choose to call, but I must decline receiving any of the other officers of your regiment.'"

"What an ill-natured old thing!" observed one.

"What a bore!" remarked another.

"Wynyard is a lucky fellow," said a third.

"Always contrives to get into the best houses wherever we are quartered," added a fourth.

"Why, to tell you the truth, my good fellow," observed Wynyard, "well disposed as I am to share my good fortune with my comrades when circumstances permit it, I must candidly confess that I infinitely prefer being the *only* officer received in the houses I like going to. There is something extremely repugnant to my feelings in seeing some three or four redcoats in a lady's drawing-room, unless, indeed, it should be on occasions of a party, or a ball. It reminds one of a military club, a reading or billiard-room, or, worse still, a barrack-room, in which the wife of some poor officer finds her-

self surrounded by the comrades of her husband, who make a lounge of her apartment, and interrupt her homely duties of repairing the linen and stockings of her poor spouse, and her own scanty wardrobe."

"But do tell us some particulars of this youthful beauty. In a visit which, to my certain knowledge, lasted no less than two hours by my watch, you, with your desire for acquiring knowledge, must have gained much information," said one of Wynyard's friends.

"Did I, indeed, remain two hours with the ladies? I really thought that not above half that length of time had passed, they were so agreeable; and they too, I may add, pressed me so much to prolong my visit that, when I did leave them, it was much against their will. There is something peculiarly engaging in the manner of the Irish ladies when they say, in their soft *euphonious* mode of speaking, 'Ah! do, now, stay a little longer!' By Jove, a man must be made of sterner stuff than I am when he can resist such gentle entreaties!"

"Then we are to understand that this aristocratic-looking young beauty addressed these entreaties to you? That does not,

however, correspond with the description you gave a few moments ago of her thoroughbred air and manner. Come, Wynyard, which is the true version?"

"You shall hear no more on the subject. I know when to be discreet; and, when a man is honoured with the confidence of such superior women, he would be inexcusable to betray it."

"O ho! there were confidences in the case —eh, Wynyard?"

"Your questions are unavailing. Not a word more will I reveal;" and Wynyard looked important.

"Did they tell you that the weather was remarkably fine? that this was a dull place? that the absence of the nobility having seats in the neighbourhood greatly injured the society? or make any other confidential communication of an equally private and interesting nature?"

"I see, Neville, you would give your ears to hear what I *could* tell, did delicacy not preclude me from betraying confidence."

The young officers winked at each other and smiled, and the elder ones glanced at Wynyard, *en goguenard;* while he, perfectly

satisfied that he had imposed on them all, looked at his watch and arose from the table.

"I'll lay a wager Wynyard is going to drink tea with the Countess O'Neill and her grand-daughter," observed one of the young men, *sotto voce.*

"Will you make up a rubber with Neville, Hubert, and me?" asked another.

"I can't to-night, my dear fellow. I have an engagement I must not break."

"I told you he was going to the Countess's."

"Come to my room, Wynyard, and I will give you some of the very best cigars you ever smoked in your life. I have just received them from London."

"Cigars," said Wynyard, with an air of disgust, "no more cigars for me. There are certain places where one would not have it supposed one had ever touched a cigar, for all the world." And Wynyard left the messroom with an air of affected mystery that set his brother officers in a roar, as soon as they thought he was out of hearing it.

"Who'll bet me five pounds that he is no more going to drink tea with the Countess O'Neill than I am?" said Neville.

"I," "And I," "And I," vociferated three or four voices.

"I'll bet ten to one he is not," observed Hubert.

"You might make it a hundred to one," said another. "I dare say he is at this moment comfortably settled in his own room with the door locked, to make us believe that he is gone out."

"Yes, yes, he thinks we are had," uttered another.

"Let him think so, and we shall have the more fun in his mystification," said Neville.

In a few days after, when Captain Wynyard thought he had allowed a sufficient interval to elapse between his first visit and his second, he again presented himself at the Countess O'Neill's door to demand admittance. But Patrick O'Donohough met him with a mien cold enough to indicate, even to the most obtuse, that the visit was unwelcome, and informed him that the Countess was not at home.

"Are you quite sure that the ladies are out?" inquired Wynyard, putting on his most insinuating smile.

"Quite certain, sir," replied Patrick, with immoveable gravity.

"Perhaps, then, you would allow me to walk in the garden? The Countess did not make any objection when I proposed it the other day."

"I am very sorry, sir; but, as the Countess did not give me any instructions to admit you, I dare not break through the general order of allowing no one to enter the garden."

"Have you been long in the family?"

"Many years, sir."

"Then I conclude you knew my cousin, Captain Mordant, who was a frequent visitor of the ladies?"

"I had that honour, sir."

"Ah! yes! How stupid of me to forget it! He wrote to me to request I would call often on the ladies, and mentioned you as being a very respectable person."

Patrick merely bowed to this speech, one word of which he did not believe, and the *ruse* it contained did not elevate Captain Wynyard in his estimation.

"At what hour do you think I should be most likely to find the ladies at home? In the evenings, of course, they do not go out, and I should like to present myself at their tae-table."

"I dare say you would, sir," answered Patrick, with a most provoking simplicity of countenance. "Indeed, so would most of the gentlemen in your regiment. But there is one obstacle, and that, unfortunately for the fulfilment of your wishes, sir, is, that the Countess never receives gentlemen at tea; nor, for that matter, at all, except it be very old friends, indeed."

"One question more, and I will detain you no longer! Do you think the Countess has determined on declining to receive my visits altogether? I shan't be at all offended by your telling me the truth—not the least, I assure you."

"'Pon my word, sir, I should rather think you have guessed the truth, not that I have been at all authorized to say so."

"But can you imagine on what plea?"

"Faith, sir, there's no play in the matter; the Countess was never more serious in all her life than when she said, 'Patrick, whenever Captain Wynyard calls at the door, mind he is not to be let in.' Now, I dare say, sir, it is wrong of me to tell you this, but, as you guessed it, I could not deny that you were right; and I hope you will not get

me into trouble by repeating what I have said."

"Certainly not, certainly not! There is no accounting for the whims of ladies, more especially when they are old. Probably the Countess is right: she thought it might be dangerous for her charming grand-daughter to see me too often."

"Very likely, sir,"

"Eh! you think so? You suspect she thought it might be dangerous!"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you hear the ladies say anything of my personal appearance—eh?" and Wynyard drew up his head, pulled his shirt-collar, and assumed the air of a conqueror of female hearts.

"It would not be right for me, sir, to repeat what I overheard the ladies say."

"It will be quite safe with me, perfectly safe."

"If I was sure you would tell it to no one, sir."

"I give you my word of honour it shall not pass my lips."

"Well, sir," said Patrick, assuming a look of stolid stupidity, "the Countess said, 'What

a very plain gentleman that Captain Wynyard is. Don't you think so, my dear?' 'I did not remark his face, grandmamma,' replied Miss O'Neill."

Wynyard grew sad, and, after a moment's pause, said, "Why, then, do you think the Countess thinks me a dangerous man?"

"I suppose, sir, that it is because Miss O'Neill, having no great desire for matrimony,—she has already refused several great offers,—the Countess thinks that, if she were to see you often, sir, she might make up her mind never to marry at all, sir, as your being so plain might turn her against all other men."

"How absurd! how very ridiculous!"

"I'm sorry, sir, to see you so vexed; indeed I am. But you know the old saying, every eye forms a beauty. I'm sure I've seen many gentlemen quite as plain as you are; no offence, I hope; but the Countess is somewhat spoilt in regard to looks, for her husband, the Count O'Neill, was one of the handsomest men that ever was seen; and Miss O'Neill's father, likewise, was a mighty fine, handsome gentleman; and, when the eye becomes accustomed to look on hand-

some men, it's mighty difficult to look on plain ones, sir.

"I won't detain you any longer," observed Wynyard, red with anger and mortification; "but pray don't mention what you've told me to any one else. I should not like it to get abroad, for it might make people think ill of the judgment of the ladies, and on that account, and on no other, I ask you not to mention it. For myself it only makes me laugh; hah! hah! hah! 'pon my soul it does;" and with a most rueful face Wynyard forced a laugh that even a child might detect proceeded not from the heart, while Patrick, glad to see him punished for his presumptuous vanity, was greatly amused.

"I think I paid him off," said he, "and I really could not help it, when I heard him say that, perhaps, the Countess might wish to decline his visits, from thinking him a dangerous person for Miss O'Neill to see often. Well, the impudence and conceit of some people, to be sure! There's no bearing 'em with patience! But I've taken the conceit out of him, I'll be bound. And then asking me not to tell any one that the ladies thought so little of him. Oh! the vain fool!

and pretending it was for *their* sakes, and not his own, that he made the request! Why, he must have taken me for a born idiot, to think of imposing on me in such a manner; but he found himself mistaken."

Captain Wynyard did not recover his equanimity of temper for the remainder of the day, nor, truth to say, for several days after. There are no wounds which produce more pain than those inflicted on vanity; and he really writhed under the castigation Patrick O'Donohough had given him. "I was quite deceived in those ladies," thought he. "I really took them to be very superior persons; but the communication made me by their stupid servant has proved to me how wrong I was in the estimate I had formed of them. I now wish I had spoken less enthusiastically of them to my brother officers, for in that case I might have affected not to wish to cultivate their acquaintance; but, having praised them so much, I must affect to be on habits of intimacy with them still, and this will give me trouble and bore me."

"Are you still as charmed with the Countess O'Neill and her grand-daughter?" inquired Captain Neville, a few days after

Wynyard's last call at the door of the Countess.

"Certainly; but why do you ask?" replied Wynyard, suspiciously.

"Because I know you have not been drinking tea with them lately."

"How do you know that?"

"Through the milliner here, who is as great a gossip as an idle and inquisitive man would wish to find in a dull country quarter."

"You most not depend on the authenticity of her information, I can tell you; for, in this instance, at least, she is wholly wrong."

"What a story-teller she must be! for, would you believe it, Wynyard, she asserts that you never have drunk tea there at all, and have only once been admitted to the presence of the ladies."

"Really, Neville, one is not in the habit of hearing or repeating the *on dits* of milliners."

"Not, perhaps, in London; but in country quarters the gossipping of such persons, I confess, amuses me."

CHAPTER XI.

The sudden illness of the Viscount Fitz-Mordant, the elder brother of Captain Mordant, announced in the English papers, filled the latter with such alarm, owing to the delicate constitution of the Viscount, which rendered every attack of illness dangerous, that he was prepared for a summons from his mother, which followed three days after the paragraph in the paper had met his eye. Sincerely and warmly attached to his brother, the confirmation of the perilous state in which he was, confirmed by the letter of Lady Mordant, occasioned him the deepest chagrin. His mother entreated that he would not lose a single moment in setting out for England, as his brother was most impatient to see him, and the physicians in

attendance were desirous that his mind should be kept as easy as possible. "He wished to have you sent for from the very first day of his illness," wrote Lady Mordant; "but, as we hoped his malady was not of so grave a nature as we now apprehend, we postponed writing for you, and he is greatly annoyed at the delay."

"Poor Fitz-Mordant!" thought his brother, "how his impatience to see me touches my heart; may Heaven restore him to health; or, if that boon so long denied him be withheld, may his life still be spared for many a year!"

How many sad but fond recollections of past kindness and confidence on the part of his brother now came back to the mind of Mordant! In his parents he had met only selfishness, and cold calculation of how he might be turned to the most profitable account for their interests; but in his brother he had ever found a considerate and faithful friend, anxious to forward his interests and promote his happiness. An unreserved confidence had ever reigned between the brothers. They were well aware of the worldliness of their parents, more especially

their mother, whose whole thoughts centred in ambition and the love of money, viewing her sons only as agents to be employed to forward her views, without ever reflecting how far the gratification of her own projects might interfere with the happiness of her offspring. And yet she professed to be greatly attached to Lord Fitz-Mordant, whose delicate health, from his boyhood, had kept his parents in almost continual anxiety. They were ever ready to pamper his appetite, to minister to his pleasures, believing that, by this weak and overweening indulgence, they were discharging the duties of affectionate parents to him, for whose life they trembled.

But, with all this culpable compliance with his desires on trivial subjects, had they been called on to make any personal sacrifice to ensure his happiness, they would have declined doing so. Their fortune, never large, they had greatly encumbered by their mutual extravagance, and these encumbrances they expected their heir should clear off, by an advantageous marriage, or by his joining his father to cut off the entail. Soon after he attained his majority, his mother, ever on the

look out for an heiress, discovered one in the orphan daughter of Lord Summerdale, left to the guardianship of a distant relative of Lord Mordant, an old bachelor, leading almost the life of a recluse, and over whom Lady Mordant soon acquired a powerful influence, which enabled her to see the youthful heiress as often as she wished, and to gain an empire over her.

Lady Mordant, with her usual dexterity, managed to create an interest for each other in the minds of the youthful pair. She represented the heiress to her son as a creature of a most angelic nature; and for once she unknowingly spoke nearly the truth; for the orphan was in reality a sweet-tempered, gentle, and amiable girl, extremely timid, and well-disposed to like any one who showed a preference for her. Lady Mordant dwelt on the misfortune of such a creature becoming the prey of a fortune-hunter, and won her son's pity for her. To the heiress she spoke of her son as one of the most faultless of human beings, pining to meet some one worthy of his heart, which had hitherto resisted every attempt to captivate it; and with health so delicate as to render

him too timid to seek the object for which his sensitive heart longed. The two individuals were too amiable to be thrown frequently together without a feeling of good will springing up between them, which, if it amounted not to a positive affection, so nearly resembled it as to impose on both for the reality.

The isolation in which the young heiress had been kept since the death of her parents prepared her heart for being grateful to the first man who paid her any attention, while the delicate health of Lord Fitz-Mordant, compelling him to the habits of an invalid, caused him to look with pleasure on the fair and innocent girl who broke on his solitude bright and noiselessly as a sunbeam enters a sick room to cheer it, and who seemed perfectly content to sit by his sofa, or easy-chair, at her embroidery frame, to play and sing to him whenever he wished, or to read aloud to him. "What a pity!" he would often say to himself, "that so artless, so gentle a creature should be enforced to become the victim of some heartless speculator, who will marry her for her fortune, and lavish it on the unworthy!" unconscious that he was only re-

peating the phrase so often uttered by his mother. Had Lady Mordant proposed, or even hinted, to him the eligibility of his wedding the heiress, to save her from a fate like the one she so frequently pointed out as awaiting her, her son would at once have seen through the scheme, and avoided lending himself to its accomplishment; but Lady Mordant was too cunning to do this. On the contrary, she never betrayed the slightest notion that the young pair could ever be any more to each other than simple friends, and thus laid her plans so judiciously that they were taken in.

"How sad it would be if he should marry some person fond of gaiety and pleasure, who would leave him to his solitude; or who, if she left him not, would let him perceive that she was sacrificing her own wishes by remaining with him!" would the heiress say when, as often was the case, she reflected on Lord Fitz-Mordant's peculiar and melancholy position. "He is so good, so patient under his sufferings; for that he does suffer I cannot doubt, although he never complains, but I see it in his pallid face, his curved brow, and a frequent expression of pain in his counte-

nance. It is impossible to express the deep interest with which he inspires me. He cannot be considered handsome—he is simply good-looking; nay, there are many, and my guardian is amongst the number, who think him plain; yet, in my eyes, he is anything but this, and I have more real enjoyment in assisting to cheer his solitude than in the gayest scenes to which pleasure could tempt me. Poor, dear Lord Fitz-Mordant, I hope he may find some one who will feel towards him as I do, and who will prove at once his nurse, companion, and friend."

"The girl cannot be called beautiful," would Lord Fitz-Mordant say to himself, "yet there is something peculiarly attractive about her. There's a dove-like softness in the expression of her eyes, a harmony, a repose in her whole face and person, and a sweetness in her low-toned musical voice that gains on me every time I see her. She is precisely the sort of girl that, were she portionless, nay, dependent, I should like to marry, and secure her independence, as the reward for her patient endurance of, and sympathy for, a poor valetudinarian like myself."

Anxiously, but with an air of assumed indifference, did Lady Mordant watch over the young persons she took so much pains to bring together, and mark their growing attachment to each other, until his physicians' having ordered Lord Fitz-Mordant to try a warmer climate, it was found necessary that he should leave England. The heiress arrived to pay her diurnal visit just at the moment that his mother was announcing to the invalid the sentence of his medical advisers, and her cheek grew pale as she listened to it; while Lord Fitz-Mordant, with undisguised chagrin, exclaimed, "What, go abroad, leave England!" and he glanced at her; "I would prefer remaining here to die!"

"My dear Fitz-Mordant, it is not, Heaven be thanked, a question of life or death, but simply the opinion of your physicians that your health would be greatly ameliorated by your passing some months in a colder climate," observed Lady Mordant.

At this moment, she was summoned from the chamber to see some visitors on business, and the young pair were left alone. Both were silent for a few minutes, absorbed in their own feelings; but Lord Fitz-Mordant,

turning his eyes to Miss Summerdale, saw that hers were filled with tears.

"You think as I do, dear Selina," said he, "that this advice to go abroad denotes an increased danger in my malady?"

"No, I really believe it originates in a hope of amended health; and,"—her lip was tremulous, and her cheek more pale than before, when she added,—"and, therefore, I should so wish you to adopt the advice of your doctors."

"And leave you, Selina,—you, whose society is the only blessing I have left,—you, the sole soother of a life of pain? No, better is it to die near you than to live away from you."

"But could I not accompany you? Your mother will, of course, go; and I might obtain permission from my guardian to go with her."

The bright blush that suffused the cheek of Miss Summerdale – the altered expression of her face—betrayed to Lord Fitz-Mordant the pleasure which the notion of accompanying him to Italy gave her. "Alas!" said he "my mother does not intend to go with me."

"Not go with you! O! surely she will

not let you depart attended only by servants?"

"A physician will accompany me, for whenever my going abroad was canvassed it was settled thus."

Miss Summerdale's face became pale as marble, and the tears she could no longer check chased each other down her cheeks in spite of every effort to control them.

"You weep, dear Selina," said Lord Fitz-Mordant. "How good, how kind, you are to me; and how shall I miss you! But no, I have not the courage to go from you. I feel that I am not equal to the effort; and, even were I to go to Italy, I should pine to death without your cheering presence." He took her hand, and, as he pressed it to his lips, he felt it tremble in his. "You will think me weak, selfish, Selina, in thus breaking in on your happy life with the gloom of mine. But your sympathy, your kindness, have spoilt me, and rendered existence insupportable without them."

"If, indeed, I am necessary to you,—if my presence mitigates your sufferings, or makes you sometimes forget them,—I am ready to devote my whole time, my whole life, to

you," replied the blushing girl, a flood of tears flowing down her face. "Don't think me indelicate, bold, or unmaidenly. Let the peculiarity of our positions plead in excuse for me. I am *alone* in the world, without parents, without any human being to whom I believed myself necessary. You have told me I have become necessary to you, dear Fitz-Mordant,—that my presence cheers you, that my absence would render you unhappy,—and, on the faith of your assertions, I offer you the hand you now hold—for ever!"

"O God, I thank thee!" exclaimed Lord Fitz-Mordant, and he raised his eyes to Heaven. "This mercy repays me for all the bodily ills I have known. Pardon me if I have ever dared to murmur at *thy* will! And you, dear blessed angel of pity, how can I ever express the feelings you have awakened in this poor heart! No; never, Selina, can I forget this hour."

There were tears in his eyes as he gazed on her fair and innocent face, and an expression of such heartfelt gratitude that she felt rejoiced that she had mastered her feminine shyness, and offered him her hand.

"But I cannot, *must not,* take advantage

of your generous pity, Selina. To accept the sacrifice you offer to make would be unworthy. To doom a creature, young and fair as you are, formed to confer and to receive happiness, to a life of seclusion in the sick-room of a poor invalid, would be a selfishness of which I am not capable!"

"But, if *my* happiness"—and she laid a peculiar emphasis on the word "my"—"depends on your accepting my hand, Fitz-Mordant, will you, *can you*, reject me?"

"What do I hear, Selina? Do I dream? Or is it possible that I can be so blessed? O! do not, my precious Selina, deceive yourself, or me. You mistake the generous pity of your noble nature for a preference I would give worlds to inspire, but which, alas! no poor invalid like me can ever hope to awaken."

"I have never yet uttered an untruth, Fitz-Mordant, and never will, knowingly; you may, therefore, put perfect faith in my words, when I declare to you most solemnly that you have become as necessary to *my* happiness as I can be to yours, and that, if you refuse to accept the hand I have offered you, bitter, indeed, and lasting, will be my disappointment."

"O Almighty God! bless and reward this pure, this angelic creature; and, if I err in accepting the sacrifice she offers, let all that can be painful in the result fall on my head alone?"

There was a solemnity in the words and looks of Lord Fitz-Mordant that greatly affected Selina; and, as she pressed her lips on his brow—the first time she had ever bestowed a caress on one of his sex—an angel might have perused every thought, every emotion of her innocent heart, without discovering a single sin to correct, or censure.

"You will accept me, dearest?" murmured she in his ear, "will you not?"

"Yes, my precious Selina, as the drowning wretch grasps the hand stretched out to save him from death."

"And we will together go to Italy; and who knows but that the Almighty, who has already vouchsafed us the blessing of mutual affection, may grant the boon of returning health to you? We will have but one mind, one heart, one soul, between us," said Selina, as she rested her head on the shoulder of Lord Fitz-Mordant, and looked fondly in his face. But suddenly a cloud passed over his

expressive countenance, his brow became contracted as if by pain, or some bitter thought, and he exclaimed, "Ah! I had forgotten, Selina, there is one obstacle to our happiness that I had overlooked. You are rich—an heiress. Would to God you were poor, or dependent, and that I could shower golden treasures at your feet!"

"But it is not my fault that I am rich," replied Selina. "Alas! it is the misfortune of my life, for it is the result of being alone on earth. Had I a father, a dear, tender mother, brothers, or sisters, I should not be a lonely, a desolate orphan; but, if this unvalued wealth should rise up as a barrier between us, then, indeed, shall I hate it and be wretched. Why should you remember I am rich? Were I poor and desolate, would you not accept me? O, yes! my heart tells me you would, and you would be cruel, indeed, were you to cast me from you because chance has given me wealth."

"But the world—the envious, jealous world—will point at me as having most unworthily sought the heiress, when I think only of the woman I adore."

"Am I, then, so plain that people should

think I could only be wedded for my wealth?" inquired the fair girl, looking so lovely as she asked the question, that Lord Fitz-Mordant felt he might well escape such a charge. "What is the world to us?" resumed she. "Are we not everything to each other? Were I steeped in poverty, and you richer than Crœsus, I would wed you without a thought of what vile motive the unworthy might accuse me; and can you, dearest Fitz-Mordant, be less courageous than I?"

Her heightened colour, her imploring eyes, as she pleaded, vanquished the pride of Lord Fitz-Mordant. He forgot everything as he gazed on that fair young face, and listened to her sweet voice, pleading for his happiness and her own.

"Bless you, Selina, bless you!" said he; "do with me as you will. I am yours, yours while life animates this poor frame, and beats in this heart, in which your dear image is for ever enshrined."

"And now, dear Fitz-Mordant, let us arrange how all is to be managed. I will tell my guardian that I have won you to consent to wed me."

"No, Selina, tell him that I adore—that I

worship you; and think myself unworthy to lift my eyes to you."

"I must tell him the truth," said Selina, smiling.

"There never were words more true than those I have uttered."

"Nevertheless, I must tell him that I had great difficulty to get you to accept my hand, and then, all the rest will be settled, for he knows I must have my own way."

CHAPTER XII.

"My dear guardian," said Miss Summerdale, with one of her most winning smiles, "I want you to do me a favour, and request it may be done as promptly as possible."

"And what, pray, may this favour be, my dear ward?"

"I won't pay you the false compliment of asking your consent to my marriage, because I have already arranged all that; but I want you, like a dear, good, kind guardian, (as I have ever found you,) to take such steps as will enable me to be married with as little delay as possible; I mean, about having settlements, and all that sort of thing, drawn up—matters of which I know nothing."

"Why, you must be laughing at me, my dear Selina?" said Mr. Henniker, putting on

his spectacles, and looking earnestly at his ward. "You talk of your marriage as an affair already arranged, and then come to me to ask me to hasten it, without having even told me the name of your intended. The gentleman should have addressed himself to me when he had obtained your consent. Such is the general custom on similar occasions." And Mr. Henniker looked very grave.

"The gentleman could not come to you, my dear guardian, because he is unwell and confined to the house."

"A curious position for a man wishing to marry, and to marry an heiress, too!"

"Ah! there it is," exclaimed Miss Summerdale, impatiently, and with a sigh. "The misfortune of being an heiress crosses me in every way, meets me on every side."

"A misfortune which many, if not all your acquaintance, would be glad to share, and probably, also, the sick gentleman in question."

"There you are greatly mistaken, Mr. Henniker, for the very circumstance of my being an heiress was the greatest obstacle to his accepting my hand, and I had great difficulty in persuading him to overlook it."

"You surely do not mean to say that it was *you* who offered your hand, and not the gentleman who sought it?" inquired Mr. Henniker, opening his eyes to their utmost extent.

"It is even so," replied Selina, casting down hers, while a beautiful smile played over her lips; "and, nay more, my dear guardian, he to whom I offered it hesitated some time, and made many objections, before he would consent to accept it."

"The puppy, the impudent puppy!" and Mr. Henniker shook his cane, which was always within his reach on account of his gout, and grew red in the face. "And you could stand this, Selina? You,—with your birth, fortune, youth, and good looks,—you could support this impertinence?"

"Yes, my dear sir, and I at length won him to consent to have me."

"But you have not won my consent to let you make a fool of yourself, nor shall you. No, no. If the fellow was in love with you, and ready to commit any folly to win you, I might be talked over to granting my consent, even though he were poor; but a man to hesitate when a girl like you took a fancy

to him, merits any punishment; and, although I do not wish to hurt your feelings, I cannot forbear saying that, had I not heard it from your own lips, I never could have believed that you could so far forget your dignity as a woman, and the respect due to yourself, as to offer your hand to any man."

Mr. Henniker had worked himself into such a rage that his ward, who had never previously seen him really angry, felt it necessary to enter into a full explanation with him. When he had heard it, he said—"If this affair has been brought about by the management of my cousin, Lady Mordant, I shall never think well of her again."

"Indeed, you wrong her; she had nothing to do in it. I saw poor Lord Fitz-Mordant, day after day, ill and suffering, and bearing his illness with such patience and resignation that he enlisted all my pity and sympathy. My presence cheered and consoled him at first, and in the end became necessary to him. We neither of us dreamed of anything more than enjoying each other's society until to-day, when his physicians ordered him to leave England for a warmer climate. Then it was that he felt he would rather die near me than

live away from me; and I—I too—felt that to deprive him of my society would inflict as much pain on me as on him; for, truth to say, he has become as dear to me as a child, for whose life a mother daily trembles, becomes to her."

"You are a good girl—a dear good girl," said Mr. Henniker, and he drew the back of his hand across his eyes; "but have you reflected on the life of anxiety and care you are about to entail on yourself? Poor Lord Fitz-Mordant will ever continue an invalid, requiring incessant care; and will you condemn your youth to the performance of the never-ceasing duties of a nurse?"

"Willingly, gladly. It is because he is an invalid, and, alas! is likely to continue so, that I wish to have the right to watch over him—to minister to his comfort."

"Good girl! good girl!" muttered Mr. Henniker, and he patted her head as he would that of a child; "but have you thought of the chagrin of losing him at last, my poor Selina, after he has wound himself into your very heart?"

"No; I have not dared to anticipate such an affliction," and her eyes filled with tears,

and her voice faltered; "but," resumed she, "should this misfortune occur, how great would be the consolation of knowing that I had for years rendered his life less insupportable—that I had cheered and comforted him to the last!"

"A true woman's heart! ever unselfish, and more willing to make sacrifices than to accept them," said Mr. Henniker, again patting her head; "but what will the world say to me, your guardian, consenting to your bestowing your hand and fortune on a poor fellow who has been an invalid since his childhood, and of whose ultimate recovery no physician could honestly hold out a hope? Being my relation, too, would not the whole world censure me for agreeing to such a preposterous marriage for a young heiress, and accuse me of favouring my own relatives at the expense of my ward?"

"Think not of the world—the cold, the heartless world; think only that you are conferring happiness on two persons dear to you—that you are enabling me to watch over and console one of the most amiable and excellent of men, a duty on the discharge of which I have set my heart. You must know,

my dear guardian, that a poor invalid, condemned to a life of constant seclusion, cannot be suspected of interested motives, as far as regards fortune, in marrying me. If you could have heard poor Lord Fitz-Mordant on this subject, you would know, as I previously stated, that my fortune was the greatest obstacle to his accepting me. His life may depend on change of climate, and do not, oh! do not, my dear kind guardian, refuse your consent, or prolong his stay in England. The ceremony that is to give me the privilege of accompanying him, once solemnized, we will set out without delay for Italy, and we will owe our happiness to you."

"Happiness!" repeated Mr. Henniker, "poor dear child! Who but a woman could find happiness in watching by a sick bed, in soothing the hours of a poor valetudinarian? But tell me, Selina, how long has this desire to wed Lord Fitz-Mordant been entertained by you? Are you sure it is no sudden freak of fancy, never seriously weighed in the scales of reason—never gravely reflected upon?"

"I have for a long time wished to pass my life with him: but, as long as I could see

him every day, and know that I cheered and soothed him, I desired no more. When however, it was decided that he was to leave England,—that I should cease to minister to his comfort, and that I saw the misery, the despair which the thought inflicted on him, —I instantly determined to obtain the right of becoming his nurse, his companion, by the only possible means of securing this mutual blessing—by becoming his wife."

"When I look on you, Selina, in your youth, your brilliant prospects, and, let me say, in your beauty,—the first time I ever spoke of it,—it seems like a dream that you, who might wed the noblest among the young men of England, should set your heart on becoming a nurse, rather than a wife; and I doubt whether I should be acting correctly in giving my consent to such a marriage."

"I wished not to remind you, that a few days ago I completed my twenty-first year, and, consequently, am free to bestow my hand where I like. No, my dear guardian, do not drive me to the extremity of taking such a step. Give your sanction to my union with Lord Fitz-Mordant, and you will add one more obligation to all those I already owe you."

Miss Summerdale looked up in her guardian's face with eyes so full of tender entreaty and childlike confidence, that the old man's sternness was subdued, and, taking her hand, he said, "Selina, if I am acting wrongly in acceding to your wishes, may God forgive me; and never may a day arrive in which you may have any cause to regret having conquered the scruples of your weak old guardian, who loves you too well to deny your entreaties!"

Selina pressed her lips to his furrowed brow, tears trembling in her eyes; and she felt a tear fall on the hand her guardian held in his, as he resigned it, and wiped his own.

"You will go and see him to-morrow, will you not, my dear friend?"

"Yes, certainly, my poor child."

"Promise me that you will say nothing of your disapproval of the marriage—nothing of your thinking it preposterous—O! that hard, cruel word!—for even now he might repent having given his consent, and again reject me!"

"Fear nothing from me, my dear sensitive girl. Having given you my consent, be assured I will say nothing that could inflict

pain, or deteriorate the blessing you are about to confer on poor Lord Fitz-Mordant."

"How shall I thank you ?—how express what I feel for all your goodness?"

"Only let me be convinced, hereafter, that it has produced all the comfort you now anticipate, and that you have never repented the sacrifice you are about to make, and I shall be satisfied."

"Do, dear, dear friend, leave off the word sacrifice. It grates painfully on my ear, and would terribly wound his."

"Just like your sex, not content with making sacrifices, but they must have them deemed *not* to be so."

"Heaven knows *I* deem it no sacrifice to devote my life to render that of Lord Fitz-Mordant more bearable."

"I believe you, dear girl; for it is one of the proofs of the superior nature of women, that they think not of the sacrifices they make until they find they have been made in vain, and then recollection becomes fraught with pain."

"That will never be my fate, for, should I only sweeten his destiny, even for a few months, I shall be grateful to God for it."

We left Lord Fitz-Mordant almost overwhelmed with delight at the unlooked for happiness that awaited him. His heart was melted to more than woman's softness by the noble devotion of Miss Summerdale, and the delicacy and exquisite tact which characterized it. "Admirable creature!" thought he; "she would fain make me believe that, in wedding a poor wretch like me, with ruined health and even increasing infirmities, that she is making no sacrifice. But ought I to let her make it—ought I to accept it? No; delicacy, generosity—every manly, every noble feeling, revolts from taking advantage of such unparalleled goodness! Oh! had that inestimable blessing, health, been mine, with what rapture would I lead her to the altar! But is it not like condemning her to the terrible fate decreed by the tyrant Megentius—of binding the living to the dead—to unite the destiny of this fair and blooming creature to one like me? I knew not until now all the misery of my cruel position! I never sought to create any stronger sentiment than friendship in the breast of woman; never believed that a poor invalid, condemned to seclusion and suffering, *could*

create any other; consequently never before experienced the bitter pain of loving, with the terrible dread of not being loved in return.

"Am *I* a being to create love? Is this faded, pallid face, this attenuated form, for which the grave seems yawning, calculated to please a youthful bride? Alas, alas! reason too truly tells me not; and yet the melting softness of her eyes, the dulcet tones of her voice, as she urged me to accept her hand, almost made me believe — improbable as it appeared — that I am dear to her, and filled my soul with a joy and tenderness which I had never previously dreamed of being reserved for me. But how distinguish between love and pity? May not that softness, that earnest pleading, have originated only in pity for my hopeless, helpless state? Yes, yes; it must be so; and I —vain, foolish, and weak—could for a short time mistake it for a sentiment I would give worlds to inspire. Pity! pity! Why, there is something insulting to manhood in the very thought—in the very word. Oh! why, when all the health, the power that ought to appertain to manhood is denied

this feeble frame, should the feelings, the pride remain?

"Was not the offer of her hand a proof that she looked not on me as a man? Would she so far have violated her maidenly timidity and natural reserve, as to volunteer to confer a boon that, in other circumstances, I would have knelt at her feet to crave? It is to the poor suffering invalid that this noble, unselfish creature offered her hand to become his nurse, and not to him who, dying though he may be, feels that he loves her as fondly, as passionately, as if health and the prospect of a long life were his. Would she bestow it on me were health mine? Probably, too probably, not. I owe all her melting kindness, her touching devotion, to pity; and, instead of the gratitude I ought to feel, my love, my pride, are wounded.

"Would I had never known her, never experienced her power of making the long and gloomy hours—so insupportable before she became my companion—bright and cheerful, as if a sunbeam illumined them, by her presence? *Then* I should have viewed the approach of death as a release from suffer-

ing; *now* it would be, oh! how bitter, as a separation from her. I cannot exist if deprived of her society; yet I feel it would be a sin, a degradation, to take advantage of her generosity. If she deceives herself into a belief that she entertains for me a more tender, a more dear sentiment than pity, is it not my duty as an honest, an honourable man, to undeceive her, and make her sensible of her error? Yes, this is the conduct I ought, I *will* pursue. I could not bear to forfeit her esteem, should a time arrive when she might in her secret heart think me selfish for having accepted a sacrifice the full extent of which she was ignorant of when she made it, and which I ought never to have accepted."

CHAPTER XIII.

WHILE these reflections were passing in the mind of her son, and inflicting torture on a heart full of sensibility, Lady Mordant was congratulating herself on having at length accomplished the object of her wishes and schemes for many months. "Well," said she to her lord, as she entered his study, "never again doubt my power to carry my plans into effect."

"And what, may I inquire, is the subject of your present self-complacency?"

"Nothing less than the certainty that at this moment Fitz-Mordant and the heiress are coming to an understanding that will lead to a union between them, and bring into our family her large fortune!"

"And you really believe that a good-look-

ing youthful girl, well born, and with a noble fortune, will ever be such a fool as to marry poor Fitz-Mordant, an invalid since his childhood, without a hope of ultimate recovery, and much more in want of a nurse than a wife?"

"I am perfectly convinced of it. For a long time I have noticed that they were becoming every day more necessary to each other, though, perhaps, neither of them were aware of this fact, nor ever would be, were they permitted to go on seeing each other every day for several hours. I saw this, and found the necessity of a *coup de maître* to bring on an *éclaircissement*."

"And what was the *coup de maître* you hit on?"

"Nothing more than renewing the proposal really suggested by Fitz-Mordant's physicians of his going abroad for the benefit of his health. This first opened his eyes to the state of his feelings with regard to Selina. The notion of leaving her was insupportable to him, as I anticipated, and equally so to her. This I saw must lead to a mutual understanding, and I left them to open their minds to each other, and make their arrangements.

I intend to effect an utter astonishment when I am informed of their engagement; for such will be the result of the *tête-à-tête* in which they are now occupied, I have not the slightest doubt. Nay, more, I will pretend to advise the heiress against the marriage, on the ground of poor Fitz-Mordant's ruined health, —the surest mode of rendering her more determined to wed him; for there is nothing like opposition for deciding young women on having their own way. This system will be also necessary for deceiving her guardian, who, though my relation, would greatly resent my having lent myself to bring the marriage about. When, *au contraire*, I appear to disapprove it, he will be more tractable, and will ultimately yield to the entreaties of his ward to grant his consent; but, even should he refuse, Selina has completed her majority, and can marry without it."

"Well, I really must acknowledge that you have conducted your scheme with great tact and judgment; but the girl must be a great simpleton, if she marries a poor helpless, hopeless invalid, like Fitz Mordant."

"Ah! you don't know women as I do!

Were he *not* an invalid, she would probably have never felt the interest and deep sympathy she entertains for him. Pity has done it all, and is often almost as strong as love, for which in all likelihood Selina mistakes her own feelings."

"But, if she hereafter should discover her mistake and repent it, and, worse still, let poor Fitz-Mordant perceive it, the effect on his sensitive feelings might destroy him."

"There is no chance of this. Selina Summerdale has too much sensibility ever to wound the heart of him on whom she bestows her hand, and would die sooner than ever let Fitz-Mordant know she repented her union with him, even though such were the case."

"But I really have some hesitation about this marriage. Were there a chance of my poor son's recovery it would be, *autre chose;* but to see a romantic girl condemn herself to be a nurse during the best days of her youth, unsupported by the hope of her husband's ever being restored to health, is in my opinion, taking an unfair advantage of her inexperience."

"Pray, Lord Mordant, don't interfere to

destroy what I have effected at the cost of no little time and trouble. This marriage, independently of all pecuniary considerations, will render poor Fitz-Mordant happy by securing a fond and gentle companion to beguile the tedious hours of confinement he must undergo; and, as charity ought to begin at home, we should think of *his* comfort before we allow ourselves to anticipate any future regret on her part—a regret which, after all, may never occur."

"It would have been better to have secured such a prize for our second son."

"His good looks and robust health might never have touched Selina's heart as deeply as his brother's ruined health has done; and her guardian would, I am sure, object to her marrying a younger brother without a title."

"Poor Fitz-Mordant's state makes me fear that his brother will not long be a younger one." And Lord Mordant, with the feelings of a father, shook his head, heaved a deep sigh, and looked sad.

"Do not render me nervous, I entreat you, by these gloomy forebodings, but bear in mind that it is our duty to render his life as bearable to the poor dear fellow as we can,

and nothing can be so conducive to effect this object, as his marriage with a sweet-tempered gentle young creature, who either is, or believes herself to be, very much in love with him."

"Perhaps so." And the father sighed again, but offered no more objections to the completion of the long-cherished scheme of his wife.

When Lady Mordant saw her son and Selina, a short time after her interview with her lord, she observed such traces of deep, yet pleasurable, emotion in the countenances of both, that she felt convinced that everything had succeeded according to her wishes. She longed to hear the particulars of their explanations, but carefully avoided asking any question that could lead to their forming a suspicion of her guessing the state of their feelings. When, however, Miss Summerdale took leave to return to her guardian, Lady Mordant remained with her son, fully expecting that he would make her his confidant; but he was too much agitated and engrossed by his feelings to enter on the subject for some time to come, and she was compelled to control her curiosity for the present.

The next day Mr. Henniker came to see Lord Fitz-Mordant, whom Selina had prepared for the visit by a few lines, the first she had ever addressed to him.

When the old gentleman entered the sitting-room of the invalid, and beheld the pallid face and shadowy form supported in a *bergère*, propped with pillows, he could not help thinking how strange was the taste which led his fair and blooming ward, whose personal attractions and large fortune entitled her to the most brilliant marriage, to prefer the poor sufferer before him to all other men. He opened the subject which occasioned his visit with great tact and delicacy. He stated that Miss Summerdale had told him of her engagement, and that, in consequeuce of the communication, he had waited on Lord Fitz-Mordant.

But, how great was the surprise of Mr. Henniker when the latter revealed to him that the reflections he had made since he had consented to accept the inestimable boon offered by Miss Summerdale had operated so powerfully on his mind as to cause him to determine on not taking advantage of her noble, her generous offer! He entered into

a full explanation of his feelings, and pointed out with even more plainness than Mr. Henniker himself had done, the objections which his own peculiar and hopeless position offered to a union with him. The fine feeling, the total abnegation of self, and the deep affection which he could not conceal he felt for Miss Summerdale, touched the heart of her guardian, who, charmed with the noble sentiments of the poor invalid, and convinced that nothing could deter his ward from wedding him, found himself combating the scruples of Lord Fitz-Mordant against the union, instead of merely acceding to it, as he had intended. Nor was his task an easy one; for, such were the delicacy and pride of the young nobleman, that he could only be persuaded at last to accept the hand of her he so fondly loved, by the reiterated declarations of Mr. Henniker that the happiness of his ward depended on the fulfilment of the engagement formed the previous day, and the condition, which no argument could induce Lord Fitz-Mordant to forego, that the whole of the large fortune of the lady should be settled exclusively on herself. His joy, when assured by Mr. Henniker of

the affection of Miss Summerdale, was truly touching, and had a great effect on her guardian, who left the house with very different feelings to those with which he had entered it.

He was no longer surprised that a mind so superior to every selfish thought, so delicate, and so highly cultivated as Lord Fitz-Mordant's, should have captivated a girl so sensitive and amiable as his ward. "What a pity it is," thought he, "that such a noble-minded young man's existence hangs on so fragile a thread! Poor girl, how will she bear to see him daily approaching nearer to 'that bourn from whence no traveller returns!' Without knowing him as I now do, I never could have comprehended the attachment he has inspired. I no longer marvel at it; for I, old and experienced as I am, cannot help entertaining an interest for him stronger than I believed it possible I could feel for one of my own sex, selfish and calculating as I have generally found them. Poor fellow! he will not long be spared to enjoy the society of his wife; but, as she said to me, the knowledge that their union had soothed and cheered his existence will

be her consolation should he be snatched from her, which is, unhappily, but too likely to be the case before long. Poor young creatures! With all that can confer happiness, save health on his side, how much is it to be deplored that this sole blessing is denied him!"

And now, the delicate scruples of Lord Fitz-Mordant being vanquished, he sent for his parents and revealed to them his engagement with Miss Summerdale. His father assured him, and with unfeigned truth, that whatever could tend to his happiness must be most acceptable to him. Not such was the artful Lady Mordant's conduct: she told him she was afraid that "so youthful and inexperienced a person as Miss Summerdale, however amiable and sweet-tempered, might, in time, grow tired of the seclusion of a sick-chamber; might wish to mix in the gay world, and partake of those pleasures suitable to her age. Her being heiress to a large fortune, too, was an objection. The world, always censorious, might—nay, too surely would—attribute interested motives to her son; *she* herself, too, might be unjustly censured for having brought the marriage about,

though, in reality, such a notion had never entered her head. In short, the whole affair had come so suddenly, so wholly unexpectedly upon her, that she could not, at first, reconcile herself to it."

Lord Mordant bit his lip. This duplicity displeased, disgusted him; and his son, rendered nervous and excited, changed colour, and was evidently greatly distressed.

"Stuff! nonsense," said Lord Mordant, "our son is old enough to judge for himself. He likes Miss Summerdale, and she likes him, which being the case, I can see no earthly objection to their marriage; so let us hear no more arguments on the subject."

"As far as the dread of having interested motives attributed to me," observed Lord Fitz-Mordant, "I have taken the most effectual means to preclude the possibility of it, by having explicitly made it a condition of my accepting Selina's hand, that the whole of her fortune be settled exclusively on herself."

His mother looked positively petrified; and the glance which her lord cast on her—a glance which said, nearly as plainly as words could do, "You see, after all your

scheming to catch an heiress, you are defeated in securing her fortune"—did not serve to re-assure her.

"Anxious as I am that you should not be suspected of mercenary motives in marrying, I must confess that the condition you have annexed to your union with Miss Summerdale was carrying your delicate scruples too far," observed Lady Mordant, with great difficulty controlling the expression of the anger and disappointment she experienced.

"In my state of health, there can be little chance of my being the survivor to inherit the fortune of my future wife," said Lord Fitv-Mordant; "and it would be an unworthy return to the noblest and most disinterested woman in the world, to give room to her guardian to think that her fortune had, for one moment, influenced me in accepting the great sacrifice she makes in wedding a poor invalid."

"Poor dear fellow!" thought his father, "he has a fine spirit, and I honour the girl for choosing him. Would to God he might recover to live long and reward her!"

In a few days after, the nuptial ceremony was solemnized by special licence in Fitz-

Mordant-house; and the same day "the happy pair," with their physician and suite, set out for Italy.

And, in truth, they were a happy pair; for, fondly devoted to each other, they looked cheerfully forward to the home they intended to make in a more genial clime, to the benefit they hoped might be derived from it, and the privilege now secured of uninterrupted companionship and sympathy.

The change of climate, the skill of his physician, and, above all, the unceasing care and cheering society of his wife, produced so salutary an effect on the invalid, that for some years it was hoped that he might eventually recover. But his continued stay in Italy was found to enervate him, and he was ordered to return to England, where he had now been two or three weeks, some days a little better, and then a little worse. Never did a man bear his sufferings with such fortitude; for, fearful of inflicting pain on the woman he adored, he would master his feelings so well that no trace of the agony he was enduring should meet her gaze, no groan escape him. Never, perhaps, did a deeper affection exist between mortals than that

which bound this pair. They were the world to each other; and, as their secluded lives and constant companionship had revealed the inestimable qualities possessed by both, to each their love had increased. Now was this bond likely to be torn asunder by the stern hand of death, and Mordant was summoned from Ireland to the bed of his dying brother.

CHAPTER XIV.

We left Captain Mordant on the eve of proceeding to England to behold once more his elder brother. Under any other circumstances, he would have felt very reluctant to leave Ireland; for, although he deemed it not right to go to the spot that contained her so dear to him, her who occupied all his thoughts, it was something to be in the same land, something to know that no sea rolled between them, and that in a few hours, if needful, he could be with her. How often had this thought consoled him in his hours of gloom and depression of spirits, and prevented his applying for leave of absence! Now it was different. He was summoned to the dying bed of a beloved brother, between whom and himself the most perfect harmony

of sentiment and the truest affection had ever reigned; and, though in some measure prepared for the event which threatened to deprive him of the dear friend and companion of his childhood, by the frail tenure by which his life had so long been held, he could not contemplate the probability of the near approach of its termination without a heartfelt sorrow, which for the time banished from his mind all regret at leaving Ireland. Nevertheless, when he entered the packet that was to bear him from its shore, he gave many a sigh as he gazed on the distant range of blue mountains which overtopped ——, and ceased not to turn his eyes towards them until they passed from his view and were lost in the horizon.

With what altered feelings did he again touch his native land! When he left it, he felt as if going into a weary exile, whence he longed to return; *now*, he would fain have lingered in the country which contained the object of his affection. Every thing he encountered seemed changed since he had last seen it; but the change was not in the scenes through which he was hurrying, but in himself, for he felt no interest in beholding spots

on which *her* eyes—those soft and beautiful eyes, so well and so often remembered—had never looked. As he approached the end of his journey, he trembled lest he should arrive too late,—lest him whom he was hastening to see should be no more! Who has not experienced this terrible apprehension when flying towards the deathbed of one always dear, but now, oh! how much dearer than ever,—in the agonized feeling excited by his or her danger? How often is the heart questioned, under the superstitious belief, so natural in such circumstances, that *it* should have some presentiment, some indication, some secret sympathy to apprize it when one unutterably dear had ceased to exist, when the soul had taken its flight from its mortal tenement!

When Mordant drove up to the door of his brother's abode, he dreaded lest he should find the shutters closed; and, having hastily descended from the carriage, was compelled to lean against one of the columns that supported the peristyle of the entrance, before he could recover sufficient courage to knock at the door. "Does he live?" demanded he of the porter, in tremulous accents.

"Yes, sir, my lord is still alive."

In the hall, he was met by his parents. Lord Mordant shook him by the hand, but without the power of uttering a word, and his mother, having embraced him, exclaimed, "It is fortunate that you are not too late. He has inquired frequently if you had arrived. Oh! you know not how regardless he has been of our interests! Perhaps seeing you may remind him of his duty to his family, so ill off as we all are in our pecuniary affairs."

Mordant felt chilled to the heart by this worldly, this unnatural conduct of his mother at such a moment; and Lord Mordant, shocked and disgusted at her utter want of feeling, turned from her, and led his son into the library, desiring her to break the news of his brother's arrival to Lord Fitz-Mordant, and to prepare him for his reception. In a few moments, Mordant was summoned to the sick-chamber, so soon to become the chamber of death; and his heart experienced one of the sharpest pangs it had ever known when, his head propped by pillows, and his hand clasped in that of his wife, he beheld his brother, pale as marble, with his large dark eyes dimmed by the film of approaching

dissolution, and his once handsome face so attenuated as to retain but slight traces of its former beauty, almost gasping for breath, so difficult had his respiration become.

"Dear brother," said he, "how I rejoice that you are come! I feared you would arrive too late;" and he extended his arms to embrace Mordant, who, deeply affected, pressed him fondly in his. "I wanted," resumed Lord Fitz-Mordant, "to have your promise, your solemn promise, that you will be a brother to my Selina, when I am gone. What she has been to me no one can ever know to the full extent. She has been the fondest wife, the most cheering companion, the tenderest nurse! In short, dear brother, she has been the guardian angel who has watched over my life, and who has converted it from a scene of trial and suffering to one of such happiness"—and here his voice faltered—"that I cannot leave it with all the resignation which a Christian ought."

He took his wife's hand, and, pressing it to his lips, said, "Brother, I place this dear hand in yours. Promise me to watch over her with the fond care she merits from you, who have ever been so affectionate a brother to

me. Never forget how precious she is to me. Remember that to her I owe all of happiness I have ever known, and that, if I regret life, it is because I love her with a passion so strong, so tender, that all the bitterness of death consists in parting from her."

While her husband spoke, Lady Fitz-Mordant's eyes were fixed on his face with an expression of such unutterable sadness, yet mingled with such heavenly patience, as melted the very soul of Mordant. "We shall not be long parted, dearest," said she, in a low, sweet tone of voice. "I feel we shall not. It is this conviction which supports me now. I have long prayed that, if the Almighty took you, I should not be left behind; and I trust my prayers have been heard. An internal feeling, not to be mistaken, tells me I shall soon join you, my own beloved, where no more partings are. Without this hope, this belief, how could I support my present anguish?"

"Not *our* will but *His* be done," murmured the dying man, who, exhausted by the effort he had made to speak to his brother, sank back fainting on his pillow. His wife bathed his temples and moistened his lips, and in a

short time he again revived, but the power of utterance was denied him. He gazed on Lady Fitz-Mordant, who bent over him, until the last, when his eyes shut, and a deep sigh closed his existence. The moment that terminated his life seemed to have ended hers, for she dropped fainting on his bed. It was long before the efforts made to restore her suspended animation were successful; she was removed to another chamber, while still in a state of utter insensibility; but, when she recovered her consciousness, she so earnestly requested to be allowed to go back to the chamber of death, that Mordant supported her to it; and, having placed a couch by the bed on which reposed the dead, she reclined on it, as had been her wont during the last few weeks, her eyes fixed on the face she had doted on.

The deep grief of Mordant for his brother seemed to be now the only circumstance that awakened any interest in her mind, and became a tender bond of union between her and him. She spoke of her own death at no distant period with a perfect confidence that led Mordant to think that she could not be in error; and, when he consulted the physician,

who had so long attended his brother, *he* assured him that symptoms of that fatal malady, consumption, had for some time manifested themselves so strongly in Lady Fitz-Mordant as to leave him little doubt of the sad result. "Her constant attendance night and day by the sick-bed, her not taking the least air, joined to her unceasing anxiety, have induced the disease of which her husband died, and I fear she will soon follow him to the grave," said the worthy doctor, who was deeply attached to this amiable woman.

It was the conviction of her own not distant dissolution which enabled Lady Fitz-Mordant to support with resignation her present heavy trial. She looked on the departure of him, so fondly loved, as only the *avant courier* of her own to that better world where she hoped to find him ready to welcome her; hence, her only wish on earth was now, not to be left to linger long after him. It was, indeed, a touching sight to behold this young and still lovely creature with every thought, every hope, fixed on eternity, and as impatiently awaiting death as a fond bride awaits her spouse.

To Captain, or, as we shall henceforth call him, Lord Fitz-Mordant, was confided the task of seeing all the mournful duties to the dead fulfilled; and, when not engaged in attending to them, he never left the chamber where the mortal remains of his beloved brother lay, watched over by his sorrowing widow, who evinced the utmost confidence in him. Some months before, a mausoleum, designed by Lady Fitz-Mordant, in painful anticipation that it would not be long untenanted, had been erected in the park of her seat in Hertfordshire, in which the remains of her husband and herself were to be interred. It consisted of one small chamber of white marble, in the centre of which a sarcophagus of the same material, large enough to contain two coffins, was placed. To this last earthly abode the dead was removed, followed by his widow and brother, for no persuasion could induce her to forego accompanying the body; and her brother-in-law deprecated any opposition to her wishes, well aware that it would not only be unavailing, but that it would disturb the calmness so necessary to her sad state. The journey was, as may well be imagined, a most melancholy one, and not

the less so that Lady Fitz-Mordant took that opportunity of explaining her wishes for her own interment, when it should please God to call her hence.

"You will see me laid by his side, will you not, dear brother?" said she; "and you will see that my wedding-ring is not removed from the finger on which *he* placed it."

She remained in the carriage with her attendant while the coffin was removed from the hearse and placed in the sarcophagus, when, the persons employed for the purpose having withdrawn, Lord Fitz-Mordant supported her into the mausoleum, that she might take a last farewell of the dead. She placed a large bouquet of her departed husband's favourite flowers on the coffin, the coverlooked on it with unutterable tenderness, saw replaced on the sarcophagus, and was borne back to the carriage.

Two days after the sad ceremony, the Countess of Mordant demanded an interview with her son. "I want," said she, "to call your attention to a subject which occupies the whole of mine. You are doubtless aware of the foolish stipulation made by your poor brother previously to his marriage, that the

whole of Lady Fitz-Mordant's large fortune should be settled exclusively on her?"

Mordant bowed assent.

"I greatly disapproved this absurd piece of romantic disinterestedness," resumed Lady Mordant, "but your poor brother was so chivalrous and self-willed that it was useless to advise him. Ever since his marriage, I have taken every opportunity, both by letters, as well as verbally, to make his wife comprehend how embarrassed our circumstances are, and how inadequate our income is to support our position and rank. She has always paid your father back your poor brother's allowance from our estate,—a proceeding wholly unknown to him, for, strange to say, he was as indifferent to our embarrassments as he was scrupulous with regard to not spending any portion of his wife's fortune on his own personal wants, which was the reason of his continuing to exact his allowance from us after his marriage,—a great absurdity after having married a rich heiress. I, however, made his wife understand our difficulties, and she paid back the amount of the allowance, and *occasionally*, not as often as might be expected, she presented me with

£1,000; and twice, when your father lost a large sum at Newmarket, she sent him the money, with a nice letter, but requesting the subject might not be named to your poor brother, which, *entre nous*, proves that *she* was well disposed to be generous, had his absurd delicacy not made him check her. Now I want you, who seem to have an influence over her, to get her to bequeath her fortune to your father, with the succession to you."

Lord Fitz Mordant absolutely started with surprise and disgust.

"She will adopt your advice, I am sure," resumed his unfeeling mother, "but she wants to be reminded of her duty; for her whole thoughts, poor romantic creature! are so engrossed by the dead, and her longing desire to join her late husband in another world, that she forgets us and our poverty. It would be too ridiculous, indeed, if this fine fortune should go out of our family, who have such pressing occasion for it, to return to a very distant relative of hers, who has already a large estate, and is little known to her,—which it surely will, if she dies intestate. You can point out to her that the best proof

she can possibly give of her love to her lost husband, is to bequeath all she possesses to his family."

"Not for worlds, mother, would I touch on such a subject. O! no; on this point I feel precisely as my poor brother did. We owe her a great debt of gratitude for having ministered to his happiness — for having soothed his existence—and it would be indelicate, and heartless to the last degree, even to hint to her that the least expectation of inheriting any portion of her fortune was ever entertained by her husband's family."

"And, in Heaven's name, what means all your devoted attention to her,—your compliance with all her absurd and romantic whims, if not to induce her to leave us her estates?"

"O, mother! can you have thought so meanly of me?" and Fitz-Mordant's face flushed with shame and indignation that he could have been so misjudged.

"Really, Fitz-Mordant, I find you are quite as chivalrous and foolish in your notions as your brother was; and I now see that this fine fortune, which, with a little

good management, might and ought to be ours, will be lost. Never were parents so unfortunate in their children as your father and I have been! What on earth is the use of having sons, if they do not bring wealth to their parents? I had hoped better things of you, and am cruelly disappointed! One thing, however, I beg you will understand: your father cannot continue to pay you the allowance settled on your brother. When that allowance was made, our affairs were better than at present. His heavy losses on the turf have terribly embarrassed him. Mine, at whist, have swelled up to more than double my pin-money. You must not, therefore, expect anything from us more than what you already have, for we cannot afford it."

"Be assured I will not add to the family difficulties," replied Fitz-Mordant, proudly.

"But this will not be sufficient. You must either persuade your sister-in-law to leave her fortune to us, or marry an heiress, to clear off our incumbrances."

"I am afraid, mother, that I can hold out no hopes of ever doing either," said Lord Fitz-Mordant, "for both are entirely contrary to my principles and feelings."

"Romantic, wrong-headed young man," muttered Lady Mordant, biting her nether lip with anger, and, ringing the bell, she desired the servant who answered the summons to inquire if she could see Lady Fitz-Mordant.

"Let me implore you, mother, in memory of the dead—in respect for the living—do not touch on the subject you have named to me with poor Lady Fitz-Mordant."

"You will allow me to be the best judge of the proper conduct to pursue on this point," observed the irritated and unfeeling woman; "for, if my only surviving son is as blind to the interests of his parents, and his own, as his romantic brother was, it becomes doubly necessary for me to take every measure in my power to preserve in the family the fortune that ought by right to be secured to it, but which the ridiculous scruples of a weak young man would risk the loss of."

CHAPTER XV.

THERE are few situations more humiliating or more painful than when a son has to blush for the conduct of a parent. Lord Fitz-Mordant experienced this feeling as his mother ascended to the darkened chamber, where her bereaved daughter-in-law reclined on her sofa, pale as death, and, with closed eyelids, resembled more a recumbent statue of Parian marble than a living being.

"No!" exclaimed the high-spirited young man, "I must not let her be shocked and tormented. I promised my poor brother to watch over her, and I will be faithful to my pledge. My mother will be angry at my interrupting the interested visit she is gone to pay, but it cannot be helped; I must have her anger, in preference to letting her shock the feelings of the poor mourner."

He followed Lady Mordant to the chamber of her daughter-in-law, and arrived in time to hear her offer some unavailing and common-place attempts at consolation to the youthful widow.

"Grief will not bring back the dead," said the Countess.

"Spare me, dear Lady Mordant; I need no consolation; I am resigned to the will of the Almighty," observed the mourner.

"But if, as it appears, you are determined, by neglecting all remedies, to abridge your own life, you will not, I trust, forget that, having no near relatives, the family of your departed husband, who are, Heaven knows, in great need of money, have the best claim on your consideration."

Lady Fitz-Mordant's pale face became red for a moment as she listened to this indelicate and unfeeling speech, and then re-assumed its pallid hue.

"Mother! mother!" exclaimed Lord Fitz-Mordant, before his sister-in-law could reply, his very temples flushed with shame, "let me entreat you to forbear! Pray say no more!"

Lady Fitz-Mordant thanked him by an eloquent glance, and thought she had never

previously seen him look so like his lost brother.

"Pardon me, madam," said she, "if I request you to spare me all reference to pecuniary matters at present. I am not equal to it."

"Nevertheless, painful as it must be to you, and it is no less so to me, whose heart—a mother's heart—must long bleed for the loss of her first-born, such is the uncertain tenure by which life is held, even by the strongest, that, seeing how precarious is your state of health, I should deem myself culpably negligent of the interests of my family if I did not bring their claims before you while you are still able to take them into consideration, and prove to the world how strong was your attachment to my dear departed son, by adopting his family as your own."

While his heartless mother was speaking, Lord Fitz-Mordant was appealing to her to forbear by earnest looks and holding up his hands, his countenance expressing, as well as words could do, his deep shame and annoyance.

His sister-in-law, greatly touched by the pain and humiliation he was suffering, mo-

tioned to him to approach her. She placed her hand in his, and said, "My dear brother, how forcibly you remind me of *him* who is gone! How often did he tell me how strongly you resembled each other in mind and feeling as well as in person!"

"Yes," observed Lady Mordant, "the brothers were exceedingly like, both being always considered to bear a striking resemblance to me, which I dare say has struck you."

Lady Fitz-Mordant made no reply, but her countenance was expressive of dissent to her mother-in-law's assertion. The latter rose and took her leave, requesting her "dear daughter not to forget the substance of their conversation; and, above all, to bear in mind the poverty of her late husband's family. Poor Fitz-Mordant," added she, "will now find himself worse off than before; for his father cannot afford to increase his allowance, which, now that he has a title to keep up, will not be"——

"O! mother, pray forbear! Not another word about me. I cannot, indeed I cannot, suffer it.

"Just like your poor brother, always more

disposed to pass over the interests of his family than to advance them," said Lady Mordant angrily, as she left the room, followed by her son.

"Mother, how could you urge poor Selina at such a time—at any time—as you have done? Think how it would have shocked and grieved my poor brother, could he have anticipated it."

"A prudent wife and mother must think of the living and not of the dead; and I suffered annoyance enough by the absurd and overstrained delicacy of your brother while he lived, not to take care to profit by the present opportunity afforded of benefiting my family, by advising poor Selina—who thinks only of her lost husband, and longs to join him in another world—of the disposition she ought, in common justice, to make of the vast fortune she must leave behind her. *You* may act the romantic, the disinterested, and play the fool as much as you please; but I beg you will not interfere with my plans, nor attempt to dictate to *me*, for I will not permit it;" and, scarcely leaning on the arm her son extended to assist her to enter her carriage, Lady Mordant, red with anger,

parted from him without even saying good-bye, and was driven away in a very ill humour.

Fitz-Mordant felt positively ashamed to confront his sister-in-law again when he re-entered her house; but she, anticipating his feelings, summoned him to her apartment.

"My dear brother," said she affectionately, "it grieves me to see that you suffer pain from our mother's conduct. I want you to be as perfectly at your ease with me on this point as if she were actually as much my mother as she is yours. Old people think so differently on certain subjects to what we do, that we should neither blame nor blush for them when they act otherwise than we should do in similar circumstances. You can no more prevent our mother from pursuing the course *she* thinks proper than I can; and, consequently, you must have no embarrassment, no *mauvaise honte*, with me. Remember always, dear brother, that we both stand in the same relation to her—you as her son, I as her daughter."

The delicacy and fine feeling which characterized every syllable of Lady Fitz-Mordant's speech lessened the shame and cha-

grin experienced by her brother-in-law at the selfish and coarse behaviour of his mother during her late visit; and, as he pressed the attenuated and almost transparent hand of the interesting mourner to his lips, a tear he could not control fell on it.

In a few days after the interview described, intelligence of the death of Mr. Henniker, formerly the guardian of Lady Fitz-Mordant, reached her. That worthy old man had died suddenly at Nice, on his route to England from Italy, where he had gone to join Lord and Lady Fitz-Mordant the year before, and was returning to his native land solely to be near his ward, should she, as he feared, lose her husband. He had bequeathed his whole fortune—a very considerable one—to her, to dispose of as she wished at her death; so that this amiable creature, already possessed of a very large fortune, now found herself with a vast addition to it.

"This accession of wealth will render it necessary for me to add a codicil to my will," said she; "and I should like it executed as soon as possible, my dear brother, for I feel that I shall not continue long with you. Do not give way to regret for this, as, be assured, I

could never more know happiness on earth, and that to be soon re-united to my beloved husband has been the sole object of my hopes and of my prayers. When I shall have gone hence, remember, when you think of me, that I shall be with *him*, happier than I ever was in life, where I was haunted by the dread of losing him; but when, having joined him in that better world, where no partings are, and where we shall enjoy eternal life together, I shall be blessed indeed."

"Is it true that Selina has inherited the fortune of Mr. Henniker?" inquired Lady Mordant of her son a short time after the news of that gentleman's death had reached her.

"I believe so," was the reply; for Lord Fitz-Mordant, fearful that this intelligence would lead his mother to fresh attempts to induce Lady Fitz-Mordant to bequeath her fortune to his family, had carefully abstained from informing her of the event.

"What a heartless old brute he must have been!" observed the lady, "not to have left his property to me, who was his relative, instead of to her, who was no relative of his, and who had already much more money than she required. But no one ever had such bad

luck as I have. No one ever leaves *me* anything! And yet I told Mr. Henniker how ill off we were. I told him of your father's losses on the turf—of my own at whist; but he merely said that, at your father's age, he ought to have given up the turf long ago, and that it would be much wiser of me to leave off whist. It is very easy for people to give advice when they will give nothing else; but I was determined, as I had to put up with his advice, I should have something to make it more palatable; so I told him that if he would enable me to pay my play debts I would pledge myself to give up whist."

"You surely did not do this! Oh, mother! how could you bring yourself to ask him for money?"

"But I did though, for I was determined to profit by our relationship, as well as to let him know how ill off we were. He said he he would give me £1,000, if I would pledge my word of honour never to touch a card any more, and I accepted the condition."

"But how have you kept it, mother? Surely, I have seen you play whist since Mr. Henniker went abroad."

"Yes, certainly; but how could I imagine

the old fellow would have found it out? He did, however, and wrote me a severe lesson, and I dare say made this an excuse for leaving his fortune to his ward, who did *not* want it, instead of to his cousin, who *did*, which proves what an ill-natured, vindictive old man he was to bear malice for such a trifle."

Fitz-Mordant could with difficulty restrain his indignation. Though well aware that his mother was a worldly-minded person, whose whole thoughts were fixed on the aggrandizement of herself and family, and who believed that to secure wealth was her positive duty, it never occurred to him that she would descend to the meanness of soliciting money from any of her friends, or relations; so that this disclosure of her own with regard to her having obtained £1,000 from Mr. Henniker shocked and disgusted him no less than her violation of the conditions annexed to the gift. What must Mr. Henniker have thought of a woman capable of such want of delicacy, and breach of faith? And this woman was —his mother! Oh! how his proud mind was wounded—how he writhed in torture at this unblushing exposure of her unworthiness!

"I have been thinking," said she, "that Selina is not near so ill, or, at all events, not so near death, as she imagines herself to be; and it has occurred to me that, as she seems so much attached to you, there could be no reason why you should not, after the lapse of a decent time, say six months, become her husband."

"Her husband!" reiterated Mordant, "the husband of the widow of my brother! The bare notion is too revolting to dwell on for a moment."

"I really do not see anything so very strange in such a match. Your brother has left no child; the law does not, I believe, oppose such a marriage; and, as it would secure her fortune, and Mr. Henniker's too, it would be a most desirable union."

"I would not, for the wealth of kingdoms, contract such a one. The very idea is abhorrent to my feelings."

"I really think that, in the nineteenth century, persons should be above such prejudices. I observed yesterday with what complacency Selina dwelt on your striking resemblance to your brother, how she placed her hand in yours! Be assured *she* would

have no objection to wed you; and, as to *your* objections, they ought to be subdued by the certainty which her ruined health offers that she cannot live above a year, if so long."

"If you wish not to drive me mad, mother, you will never again revert to this hateful project of yours: a project so fraught with insult to the living and disrespect to the dead. Oh! how little do you know the angelic purity of Selina—how little do you understand the feelings of your son—when you, for a moment, entertain such a thought as the one you have confided to me."

"I believe I shall always find myself mistaken whenever I suggest a reasonable and advantageous measure to you, as was the case with your brother. My sons were more fitted to enact the *rôles* of heroes of romance than men of the world, and vain is every attempt on my part to secure them the fortune of which they stand so much in need."

Having uttered this speech, Lady Mordant, with an air of offended dignity, left the room, believing herself a very ill-used person, and her son as weak-minded as ungrateful. The indignation Lord Fitz-Mordant evinced at the proposal made by

his mother discouraged her from again reverting to the subject with him; and, as he took care to be always present during her visits to her daughter-in-law, she was deterred from shocking her by naming it; but to this precaution alone was the poor mourner indebted for escaping the knowledge of a scheme that would have outraged her feelings beyond all endurance, and which would have, probably, shortened her life.

Faithfully did Fitz-Mordant fulfil his pledge to his departed brother, to watch over the precious object he had left behind him. He devoted his whole time, his whole thoughts, to the poor invalid. He would read to her for hours every book she wished for, and, most frequently of all, the *Book of Life*, whence she never failed to draw comfort. She loved to speak of her departed husband, to dwell on those inestimable qualities which had awakened in her heart an affection little short of adoration; and often did the tears of the widowed wife and fond brother mingle together, as she recounted various incidents illustrative of the noble mind and generous heart of the departed. Thus passed the three months that followed the death of Lord Fitz-

Mordant ; each day betraying some symptom of increasing weakness that but too clearly proved the near approach of the hour that was to re-unite the widow to her beloved. Before the expiration of the fourth month, she resigned her soul to God without a pang ; and a sweet smile denoted the blessed hope in which she died. Her last words were, "Bless you, brother, for all your affection —I am going to Him!"

CHAPTER XVI.

Long and deep was the regret of Fitz-Mordant for the death of his sister-in-law; nor did the bequest of a large fortune diminish his grief. She left him not only her own estates, with a considerable sum in the funds, but added to it that which she had so lately inherited from Mr. Henniker. When the will was opened, the disappointment of Lady Mordant could not be concealed. "Such ingratitude," said she to her lord, "never was heard of. Not even a few paltry thousand pounds, nor any portion of her jewels, left to me; it really is too disgusting! And I, like a fool, endeavouring to serve the interests of our son with Selina, little dreaming how effectually he was studying *his own*, without ever thinking of ours."

"Then you suppose that, by showing her such constant attention, he was playing a part, and that to inherit her fortune was his motive?" observed Lord Mordant.

"Decidedly, I do. What else could have induced him to turn *garde malade*, and domestic chaplain?"

"Pure goodness of heart and respect for the memory of the dead, and pity and kindness to the poor dear creature who is gone."

"But could he not have induced her to bequeath a portion, at least, of her wealth to us?"

"I dare be sworn he never once thought of influencing her testamentary disposal of her property; and probably it was this proper and manly delicacy on his part which led her to leave it all to him."

"Yes, yes; *he* knew well enough what he was about, and we, no doubt, shall find him even less generous than our daughter-in-law was to us, for he has been long enough poor to know the value of money."

"We have no right to expect anything from him. We have been much to blame, Lady Mordant, and I take shame to myself in confessing it. No parents have done less

for their children than we have, and the property, some portion of which ought to have been appropriated to their comfort, has been lavished on our own follies."

"Speak for yonrself *only*, Lord Mordant. *You*, I grant, have expended countless thousands on the turf, and persuaded your eldest son to join you in mortgaging the estates, which, had he been wise, he never would have done."

"He was the noblest, the most generous, of human beings, and it is this knowledge which makes me so much more regret that I took an unfair advantage of his filial affection." Tears moistened the aged eyes of the father, and he turned aside to wipe them away."

"You blame yourself too much," observed his callous wife. "The estates were yours for your life, and you had just as good a right to expend your income as you pleased, as I have to dispose of my pin-money."

"Not after I was a father. It was my bounden duty to leave my fortune to him who was to succeed me as clear as when I received it. and, by savings from my income, to add to the provision arranged on our mar-

riage, for younger children. Would I had only done my duty towards my children as faithfully, as tenderly, as they fulfilled theirs to me, and I should not now have to bear the pangs of self-reproach!"

"Well, Heaven be thanked! *I* have nothing to reproach myself for!"

"Not your extravagance, your love of play?"

"Mere drops of water in the ocean compared with your losses on the turf. And, if I did lose some few paltry thousands, did I not secure one of the richest heiresses in England for my son?"

"I deny this last assertion. My poor boy's own merits won the heart of that pure-minded and charming creature, whose nature resembled his, and enabled her to appreciate him."

"Ay! so *you* may think; but I am convinced the marriage never would have taken place, if *I* had not managed it. And very little gratitude did either my son or his wife show for the service I rendered them."

"I must confess that I never could discover any cause for gratitude; but surely poor Lady Fitz-Mordant was always most

generous to us. Did she not refund the allowance settled on my poor dear boy, and, on more than one occasion, come forward, unsolicited, to rescue me from the consequences of my losses on the turf?"

"And well she might. What else could she have done with her large income, and the vast accumulation during her long minority. They, who by his wretched state of health were compelled to live in seclusion—to give up all public amusements and hospitalities—what occasion had they for the money which two persons like you and I absolutely required, mixing a great deal in society, and in a measure obliged to maintain the family dignity, they being prevented from doing so. Lady Fitz-Mordant's generosity to me was limited to occasional gifts of £500 or £1000, accompanied with a strict injunction to conceal the donation from her husband, so I really see no reason to be grateful to her."

"And I see the greatest." And the old lord, much less callous than his wife, sighed deeply at the sad retrospection.

"One thing I am persuaded of," said Lady Mordant, "and that is, that we shall find

our son much less generous towards us than Lady Fitz-Mordant, for there is a sternness about him with me that argues little for his filial affection."

"I have remarked nothing of this. On the contrary, he has been very affectionate to me."

"That was *before* he was aware of the vast fortune he was about to inherit."

"You wrong him; indeed, you do. I have seen no change in his manner."

For some weeks, Lord Fitz-Mordant's feelings were so saddened by the late melancholy events he had witnessed, that his thoughts reverted not to the high prospects to which his altered position opened. It appeared to his sensitive mind like ingratitude to the departed, to allow himself too soon to forget them, or to seek for happiness until time had in some measure healed the wounds in his heart inflicted by their deaths. But, as day after day rolled over in the monotonous seclusion, to which he deemed it right to confine himself during the month that followed the interment of Lady Fitz-Mordant, gleams of hope would flit across the cloud of sadness that oppressed him, and Grace O'Neill, in all

her fondly-remembered loveliness, would rise up before his mental eye, and now, all pecuniary obstacles to his preferring his suit for her fair hand being removed, he would indulge the hope of, at no very distant day, calling her his own. He dreaded no opposition on the part of his father, whose whole conduct of late was more indicative of a desire to forward than to impede the happiness of his only son; and he had to his chagrin discovered that the concurrence to any of his projects might at all times be obtained from his mother by—gold, a discovery which, while it left him free from any dread of her not readily sanctioning his proposals to the Countess O'Neill for the hand of her grandchild, had deeply pained him in another point of view, by greatly deteriorating the respect he wished to feel towards his parent.

Solitude is the best balm for grief, for, by affording time to those who suffer its pangs to indulge their melancholy, and to dwell, over and over again, on every sad circumstance connected with the affliction endured, the mind becomes inured to the loss sustained, and calmness and resignation by degrees replace the bitterness of regret. The

departed are not forgotten, but they are remembered with a pensive tenderness that hallows their memory. Not so is it with those who endeavour to escape from grief by rushing into the gay and busy world before it is a little softened by time; for grief will not be cheated of its rights, and will return with renewed bitterness for many a weary day and sleepless night, during the intervals of the efforts to shun it, to reproach those who make the vain attempt.

The hour was now arrived when, having paid a due tribute of affection and respect to the loved and honoured dead, Fitz-Mordant could, without self-reproach, turn to think of what was due to the living. He felt that every week, nay, every day, that he allowed to pass by after this period had elapsed, which propriety required should be devoted to solitude, without writing or proceeding to Ireland to lay his hand and fortune at the feet of his beloved Grace O'Neill, was a wrong inflicted on her, by letting her believe she was forgotten Hope whispered that such a belief would occasion her pain, and he would not prolong it a moment longer than he thought it necessary. He sought an in-

terview with his mother, and, in a few words announced to her his intention of entreating the hand of a young lady who had long been in possession of his heart. She heard him in silence, but started and changed colour when he named Miss O'Neill. He noticed the start and change of colour, but he affected not to perceive either.

"You are still full young to marry, my dear Fitz-Mordant," said she, after a pause. "You have not gone into society since your altered position. When you do enter the world, you will find yourself very differently received as Lord Fitz-Mordant, possessor of a very large fortune, to what you were when only Captain Mordant, with the scanty portion of the younger son of a nobleman known to be impoverished."

Lord Fitz-Mordant was about to interrupt her, but she requested to be heard to the end.

"You will now," resumed she, "be welcomed everywhere. Society will receive you with open arms. Mothers and aunts will court you for their daughters and nieces; you will be *fêted* everywhere, and may select a wife from amongst the highest and proudest

nobility in the land. Your fortune will entitle you to marry not only the noblest, but the richest heiress in England; and is it not rash and premature, to say the least, to sacrifice such brilliant prospects before you have entered the fashionable world, and enjoyed the triumphs it will offer you? If, after having done so, you still prefer wedding the obscure and portionless young person on whom you intend to bestow your title, you will have the satisfaction of being convinced that you do indeed prefer her to all those ladies of your own station and fortune whom you might have married. As it is, you cannot be sure of the stability of your own sentiments, because you have had no opportunity of trying them by the criterion I propose."

"I should little value the most brilliant reception in society, when aware, as I should be, that I was indebted for it solely to my altered position. The large fortune that I have so unexpectedly inherited exempts me from the necessity of looking for fortune with a wife: and our family is noble enough on all sides to permit me to marry an untitled gentlewoman of ancient descent, and grand-

daughter of one of the most esteemed and respected Counts and Generals in the Austrian service."

"A rank which brings no consideration whatever in England," observed the Countess of Mordant; "and, permit me to add that, although *you* are rich enough to be able to dispense with wealth in a wife, your parents are so ill off as to render it extremely important to them that their only son should acquire the means to ameliorate their po sition."

"But have I not already ample means to effect this?" inquired Fitz-Mordant.

"From your not having hitherto named any such intention, and so long a period having elapsed since your acquisition of fortune, I concluded that, probably, you waited until you had selected some rich heiress whose wealth would enable you to do something for us, without making any breach on the large inheritance you possess."

"I am sorry you judged so ill of me, mother. In truth, my thoughts have been with the dead since I lost them; but it has been my intention to render your and my father's position comfortable ever since I became aware of my altered fortune."

The countenance of Lady Mordant brightened up at this news, and, assuming an air of affection, she said, "Certainly, if you think yourself rich enough, with the *two* fortunes you have inherited, to make an ample provision for your parents, my desire to see you marry an heiress must cease."

"The day that witnesses my marriage with Miss O'Neill will see me secure to you and my father a provision that will, I believe, leave neither of you anything to wish for."

"Excuse me, my dear Fitz-Mordant, when I say that I really cannot perceive why your liberality to your parents should be made contingent on your marriage to this lady?" observed Lady Mordant, with an air of pique and dissatisfaction.

"It is a fancy of mine, mother, perhaps a foolish one: but being now wholly independent in position and in circumstances to please myself in a wife, and fully determined never to marry any one but Miss O'Neill, I have a desire that the day which will be the happiest of *my* life should also bring happiness to you and my father, by freeing you both from all pecuniary embarrassments, and securing your comfort and independence for the future."

"Ah! yes, my dear Fitz-Mordant, now I comprehend. How like you! Always romantic! Wishing to wind up like a novel, or a comedy, with the happiness of all concerned, in the last act? It is a very pretty notion, very pretty indeed; and I only hope it will soon be carried into effect. I quite long to see my new daughter-in-law, and shall be delighted to receive her. Much as I dislike Ireland, I really will make no objection to accompany you there, as a mark of respect to the future Lady Fitz-Mordant, if you think such a mark of attention will be acceptable to her?"

Fitz-Mordant, though gratified to find his mother so tractable, could hardly forbear smiling at her present impatience for his nuptials, being well aware that this impatience was wholly because he had made the epoch of the provision for his parents contingent on his marriage. Nevertheless, he controlled his risible faculties, and merely said that, though very grateful for her kind offer of going to Ireland, he would not give her that trouble, but merely be himself the bearer of letters from her to the Countess and Miss O'Neill."

"I will write anything, everything you wish, my dear Fitz-Mordant, and I sincerely hope your happiness may not be long delayed."

A hope, the sincerity of which her son did not doubt, owing to his knowledge of how much her own depended on it. Fitz-Mordant next sought an interview with his father, to whom he confided his matrimonial project.

"I wish you every felicity with the object of your affection," said the Earl. "May you be as happy as my poor dear boy, your brother, was in his marriage! And I entertain a sanguine hope that you will, for you are as unworldly as he was, and are sure to marry solely from pure affection. I give you my blessing, and will be glad to extend it to your wife. I want the consolation of seeing the only son God has now left me, happy, for the death of your poor brother, and that of the admirable creature who cheered his existence, have terribly shaken me."

The old man's eyes filled with tears, which melted the kind heart of his son, who, pressing him affectionately to his heart, said, "Be assured, my dear father, you shall ever find in

me and my wife the utmost desire to secure your comfort and peace."

"I have not deserved kindness from my children," and Lord Mordant's tears rolled down his furrowed cheeks, "for I have unjustifiably wasted the fortune that should come to them, and have——"

"Not another word, dear father. All shall be remedied. You shall never again have a pecuniary annoyance."

"And never again will I venture on the turf, or risk a shilling. Would I had never done so, for your generosity makes me ashamed of my past folly!"

CHAPTER XVII.

Lord Fitz-Mordant set out the following day for Ireland, having previously taken the precaution of supplying each of his parents with sums of money sufficiently large to preclude the possibility of their experiencing any want during his absence. He travelled as rapidly as possible, and embarked at Holyhead on board a packet which was to sail for Dublin in an hour after his arrival. The wind was rough but favourable during the first two hours of the voyage, and he looked forward with joy to finding himself shortly in the same land with her so dear to him. How many tender recollections connected with her filled his mind! How many blissful anticipations of happiness to come cheered his heart! How impatiently did he count the

hours that must elapse before he could behold that lovely face!—before he could see the blushing cheek, the downcast lids, so often looked at by him with ill-concealed rapture!—before he could hear the sweet accents of that low and melodious voice never listened to without delight! How would she receive him when he should first appear? Would she turn from him with proud disdain for his having allowed so long a time to elapse before he confessed his long, his unalterable love, or would she at once divine that his presence could only be accounted for by his coming to claim her hand? How difficult would he find it to restrain his feelings on seeing her, and to keep from throwing himself at her feet, and avowing that his happiness, his destiny, were in her hands!

As all these thoughts passed through his mind, he wondered how he had hitherto borne his absence from her; how supported the uncertainty of ever beholding her again?

So deeply and wholly engrossed was Lord Fitz-Mordant by his reflections, that he had not noticed a change in the weather. The wind, rough and boisterous when the vessel

had sailed, had now become violently tempestuous. It whistled shrilly through the shrouds, impelling the ship onward with fearful velocity one moment, and the next throwing her nearly on her beam-ends, while the foaming waves dashed over the deck with fury. The sounds of hurried feet rushing from one side of the vessel to the other; the loud voices of the seamen, above which was heard that of the captain giving his orders for the management of the ship, and the wild howlings of the storm becoming every instant more violent, were mingled with the shrieks of the terrified female passengers and children. The vessel seemed one minute to ascend with tremulous movement the mountainous and opaque green wave, as a terrified courser treads on the unstable ground, shook by the mighty efforts of a labouring earthquake, and the next it plunged, reeling from the shock, into the yawning abyss between two vast waves which threatened to ingulf it, its timbers creaking as if they were rent asunder, and the deck covered with the dashing foam of the hissing surges.

This was the first time that Fitz-Mordant had ever beheld a storm at sea; and, al-

though hitherto a stranger to fear, he now became sensible of it. In all the various dangers to which the life of man may be exposed, there is no one in which the consciousness of his own utter helplessness to escape it is so fully impressed on him as in that in which Fitz-Mordant now found himself. The sea, to use the hackneyed expression, ran mountains high; the wind howled, as if all the spirits of the deep were shrieking in the agony of terror; the breaking of the waves against the vessel, which reeled and staggered beneath each shock, threatened soon to dash her to pieces; and the countenances of the passengers and crew bore evidence that hope was already dead in their breasts. Not a star shone forth from the murky clouds to light the trackless sea over which the helpless ship was madly driven, and eternity in one of the most terrible forms through which it can be reached was in the minds of all.

Where were now the bright hopes that had so lately cheered the breast of Fitz-Mordant?—the blissful visions of love and happiness, in the anticipation of so soon beholding the object of his affections, to part from her no more? What availed his wealth, his fine

seats, which he could never see, when every moment threatened to ingulf him in that foaming sea which rose as if to sweep away him and all around him? And Grace, his adored Grace, would never know that he was lost, when going to claim her for his bride!—would never hear how fondly, how truly, he had loved her!—would never learn how he had grieved over the obstacles that had opposed their union!—and how he had flown to her when they were removed, to share all the gifts which fortune had sent him with her! The sudden change from the brightest hopes to the darkest despair almost unmanned him; yet he lost not his presence of mind, and determined to make every effort to escape the fearful death that menaced him. He took off his coat and boots, in order to swim, should the vessel go to pieces, or be dashed on the Welsh shore, against which the wind was driving it. The captain ordered guns to be fired and signals of distress to be made, while the male passengers, led by Fitz-Mordant's example, lent their assistance to the crew.

But vain were their efforts to save the doomed ship? The mainmast was snapped

in pieces, and in its fall knocked three or four of the ablest seamen overboard, their cries for a minute mingling with the howls of the blast, and then for ever choked by the waves.

A large ship was now descried, which, by the light at its prow, the wretched passengers and crew could see was bearing down on the packet with a fearful velocity, which turned the faint hope of succour entertained for a few minutes when she was first beheld, into a foreboding terror that she would be driven against the vessel, and cause her instant destruction. The despair and agony of those who knew that a few minutes must decide their fate are not to be described! The past lives of each and all were, in this brief interval presented to their tortured minds with all the vividness of the most recent events, and shrieks of despair burst from many to mingle with the howling wind, and roaring sea.

Fitz-Mordant awaited with folded arms the catastrophe he believed to be inevitable, and from his soul sent up a silent prayer to the Almighty for pardon for his errors. He uttered no sound, but, with his eyeballs al-

most starting from their sockets, fixed his gaze on the large ship which every moment sped nearer to the packet. On it came, dark and shadowy, like a vast monster about to spring on its prey, the lurid light at its prow serving only to render a portion of its outline visible, as, alternately rising on the wave and then sinking into the yawning chasm of waters, it disappeared for an instant to rise again. And now it came so near, that many of the poor wretches on board the packet rushed to the side of the vessel nearest to the coming ship: and, deceived with regard to the distance, and hoping to reach it, leaped madly from the deck of their own vessel, and found themselves, alas! plunged into the watery grave that yawned to receive them. Frantic shrieks and hoarse shouts were heard on every side, and in the next minute a fearful crash split the packet in two, and its unhappy occupants were dashed into the foaming abyss.

Fitz-Mordant, who had not lost his presence of mind, had kept himself prepared for the event. He was a good swimmer, and an instant before the dreadful crash of the vessel he jumped overboard, and swam as far away

from both ships as he could, to avoid being drawn under water by either, or being seized by any of the unhappy persons who ere long would be struggling for life. He saw the vessel he had only an instant jumped from, cut in two, beheld both ends sink into the sea, and the large ship pass over them; heard the cries of the drowning men, who, borne up from the wreck, floated around amidst the shattered fragments of it until, one by one, they disappeared for ever into the deep. Then he directed his course to the ship, and, approaching as near as he could to it with safety, he cried aloud for aid.

The crew were using their best exertions to save some of the poor drowning wretches of the packet, and, the cries of Fitz-Mordant being heard, a rope with a large noose was thrown to him, which, after some efforts, he seized hold of with the force of desperation, and was drawn to the ship, from which two or three sailors being let down, secured by ropes, swam forward to assist him, and helped him to ascend, stunned and exhausted. He dropped senseless on the deck, and long was it before the efforts of those around him could restore suspended animation. He

was placed in a warm bed, when it was found that he had received several severe contusions from the floating spars and fragments of wood from the wreck with which he had come in contact while he swam towards the ship.

"The poor devil was a good swimmer!" observed one of the crew.

"He is the only person saved," observed another.

"I should think he is certainly of the upper class," remarked another, "for his linen is remarkably fine."

"No, no," said another speaker; "be assured none of the upper class, as you term them, could have struck out as this chap did. I never saw a better swimmer."

"He must be a cool-headed fellow, too, for he had prepared himself for swimming—had nothing on but his shirt and drawers."

"He has got some devilish hard knocks, I can tell you, which he'll feel when he comes to himself."

"A glass of grog will do him more good than anything."

"Ay, ay, a glass of grog is Jim's remedy for every ailment."

After a lapse of half an hour, Fitz-Mordant heaved a deep sigh and opened his eyes. "Where am I?" exclaimed he, looking around him.

"All safe, my hearty, on board the good ship, Jeannie Deans. You were devilish near making a trip to t'other world, I can tell you, and, if you hadn't been a rare good swimmer, you would, too.

"And are many saved?"

"Not one beside yourself, though we tried all we could."

Fitz-Mordant closed his eyes again, and a prayer of thanksgiving arose from his heart for *his* safety when so many of his fellow-creatures were swallowed by the relentless waves. His faithful servant, too, was among the dead, and he remembered the poor man with deep regret. He now learned that he was on board a merchantman bound from Dublin to Liverpool. Having heard the signals of distress from the unfortunate vessel in which Fitz-Mordant had been a passenger, the captain had determined to change his course, with the intention of assisting the ship in danger, when, unhappily, the falling of one of the masts had extinguished the

light on board the packet, and, before the crew of the Jennie Deans were aware of it, their vessel bore down on the packet, already too much disabled to escape the coming contact, and caused its total destruction. The storm, lulled for a brief interval, again raged with extreme fury, requiring all hands on board to work the labouring vessel.

Fitz-Mordant was left alone in the rude cabin to which he had been taken, totally incapable of moving, while the rushing of feet above his head, the loud and hoarse voices of the sailors, the deafening noise of the howling winds and furious sea, precluded the repose of which his exhausted frame stood so much in need. He felt that, should the vessel be in danger, which he strongly suspected it was likely to be the case, he could no longer hope to assist in saving himself from drowning in his present feeble and helpless state. Could he even creep upon deck, and so meet death as the sailors might, it would appear less repugnant to him than to encounter it alone, and by suffocation in the wretched hold. But vain were his regrets and *triste* forebodings, and unavailing were his attempts to make himself heard:

no one attended to his calls, no one came to moisten his parched lips; so busily occupied were all the sailors, that they seemed to have forgotten his existence in their efforts to preserve their own.

A violent pain in his head now assailed him, his temples throbbed with agony, and a burning fever scorched his head and brain. Delirium quickly followed, and under its influence he believed himself tied down in bed in a ship on fire, from which his only chance of escape was to extricate himself by breaking the cords that bound him, and by swimming to shore. He struggled desperately to free himself from his imagined bonds, and these violent efforts increased the pain and fever from which he was suffering, until, totally exhausted, he sank into a state of torpor, in which, several hours after, when the vessel had safely weathered the gale, he was found nearly dead. The captain, who had witnessed on former occasions similar attacks, immersed a coarse sheet in water, and wrapped Fitz-Mordant in it, changing it as soon as it became heated. He bound his burning temples with wet towels, and gave him cold water to drink. This simple treat-

ment relieved the sick man, and when, the following day, the vessel entered Liverpool, the captain had him removed to an inn nearest the quay, and humanely sent for a physician to attend him. The doctor pronounced his patient to be labouring under a violent brain fever, the effect, probably, of his recent shipwreck, with all the circumstances of which the captain of the merchantman had acquainted him.

"I don't know who or what he is," said the captain, "but I really believe him to be a gentleman, for his hands don't look like those of a working man. His hair, too, denotes that it has been taken care of, for it is soft and curly; and his linen is very fine. Here's £10 towards paying for what he may require here. When he comes to himself he'll be able to tell who he is, and to let his friends be written to. I'm forced to sail tomorrow; but I'm well known in this town, doctor, and will engage to pay for whatever he may require until I come back again, which will be in three weeks. Don't let the poor fellow want anything, that's all, for I've taken a kind of fancy to him, and won't begrudge spending £10 or £20 more to save

his life, and make him comfortable until he can hear from his friends. If he recovers, which I hope he will, let him have my address, for I dare say the poor fellow will be glad to repay me if he has the means: if not, I'll be none the poorer for the loss; and a British sailor, though only in the merchant service, will never repent doing a good action."

Having taken another look at the poor sufferer, who with a pale face and closed eyes lay insensible on the bed, Captain Simpson withdrew, leaving Fitz-Mordant in care of the doctor.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"YES, yes," said Dr. Wellstead, after having raised the counterpane and sheets of the bed, and closely examined the linen of his patient, "the captain was right; this is too fine for a poor man, or one in an inferior class of life. A love of fine linen is peculiar to the well-born. The hands, too," and he raised one and looked at it, "are those of a gentleman; well pared and polished nails; no trace of work here;" and he laid down the hand he had been inspecting. "This may turn out a good job, and cannot, under any circumstances, prove disadvantageous to me, for he will either die or recover before the £10 are expended. I must closely watch the newspapers for some time, to discover what ship has been lost, and if any of the passengers were known? Poor fellow, he is terribly bruised, and must have been sadly knocked about. Luckily, there is no limb bro-

ken," a fact he had ascertained by lustily pulling the legs and arms of Fitz-Mordant.

For three days, little change took place in the sick man. He raved wildly at times, used desperate efforts to get out of bed, and then sank into a state of exhaustion for some hours. Dr. Wellstead placed a nurse and one of the assistants of the nearest apothecary in attendance on his patient, looking in regularly thrice a day himself to see that his instructions were carried into effect; but it was not until the fifth day that Fitz-Mordant was restored to consciousness. Weak, and so languid as to be scarcely able to speak, Fitz-Mordant opened his eyes and gazed around him. The first object his glance fell on was the nurse, a decent-looking woman of about sixty years of age, who, with spectacles on nose, was reading a well-thumbed volume, on which her thoughts seemed wholly occupied. The apothecary's assistant, entering the chamber a minute after, whispered an inquiry about the sick man.

"As quiet as a lamb" was the answer. "He has been sleeping some time. That last calming draught the doctor gave him has done him a world of good. Ah! there's nothing in this world like sleep for the sick, Mr. Adams; ay, and for the unhappy, too. It makes the sick man insensible to his ailments, and the unhappy

one forget his cares! If God did nothing more for poor mortals than to grant them sleep, it is such a blessing as to merit all our gratitude."

Never did Fitz-Mordant feel more disposed to assent to the truth of an assertion. Not so Mr. Adams; for, with all the pertness peculiar to the young and inexperienced members of his profession, he remarked, somewhat contemptuously, that "as certain medicines invariably produced sleep, there was less cause for gratitude than if it came naturally."

"But is it not to the same power that grants natural sleep that we owe the medicines which produce slumber, Mr. Adams?"

Whether Mr. Adams was puzzled by this question, or declined a controversy with the worthy and pious nurse, we know not, for, before he did more than shake his head, Fitz-Mordant inquired where he was.

"In Liverpool, sir, at an inn where you were brought from on board a merchant ship, in a state of great suffering," replied the nurse.

"I hope you feel better," inquired Mr. Adams.

"Much better," answered Fitz-Mordant; and then, faintly smiling, added, "but extremely hungry."

"A good sign, sir," observed the nurse, removing her spectacles, and laying them down. "I expect the doctor every minute, and hope he will allow you a little weak chicken-broth."

Weak chicken-broth seemed a very unsatisfactory sustenance to the excited appetite of the sick man, though the tone in which the nurse named it, indicated that she considered it a very tempting indulgence.

"Allow me to feel your pulse," said Mr. Adams, drawing out with a very consequential air, a large old-fashioned silver watch with one hand, while he advanced the other to span the wrist of Fitz-Mordant.

While he was still counting the pulsations, Dr. Wellstead entered the room, on which Mr. Adams, with an appearance of no little embarrassment, hastily resigned the hand he had seized, consigned the large silver watch to his pocket, and withdrew to a distant part of the chamber.

"I am glad to see you better, sir," said the doctor, approaching the bed. "You have been seriously ill, I assure you. Let me look at your tongue. Not right, yet."

"I am extremely hungry, and should greatly like something to eat," observed Fitz-Mordant.

"I must first feel your pulse."

This operation was performed with all due ceremony; a handsome gold watch, to which was annexed a massive gold chain, with two or three seals, being drawn forth and consulted, while the pulsations were counted.

"The pulse is quiet enough, the fever quite gone," said the doctor. "Yes, I think I may allow you some chicken-broth, with a small piece of dry toast with it. Mrs. Miller, let my patient have the broth and toast as soon as possible."

"There is some in readiness, sir," replied the thoughtful and active matron, hurrying from the room to procure it.

"Any pain left in the head; any throbbing in the arteries of the temples?"

"No, thank you; I only feel weak and hungry."

"You have got a very intelligent and attentive nurse, sir, who will make you as comfortable as possible; and I trust that in a very few days I shall get you all right again."

In a much shorter time than he expected, Mrs. Miller appeared with the chicken-broth and dry toast; and, having propped up the weak frame of Fitz-Mordant with pillows, assisted him to partake of the slight collation for which he so much longed.

"Slowly, sir, slowly," said Dr. Wellstead, observing how rapidly the broth and toast were disappearing. "You must not make too free, at first."

"How long have I been here?" inquired Fitz-Mordant, "and how did I get here?"

"You have been here five days; you were confided to my care by the captain of a merchantman, named Simpson, who, being obliged to sail from Liverpool, left £10 with me for your use, and his address, whenever you should feel disposed to write to him."

"Kind, excellent man," murmured Fitz-Mordant.

"You must ask no more questions to-day," said the doctor. "To-morrow, if you continue to mend, I will communicate all I know to you. At present, you must remain quiet, and take the draught I am going to prescribe for you, the last thing before you go to sleep. I will be with you by ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

So saying, Dr. Wellstead retired, and proceeded directly to the public reading-rooms, to look over the newspapers, in order to glean some intelligence about the lost packet and its passengers. He took up the *Times*, turned to the shipping news; but, before he had folded back the paper, saw in large letters the words, "Fearful shipwreck of his Majesty's packet, the Falcon, plying between Holyhead and Dublin, with the loss of all on board, except one male passenger."

Then followed a detailed account of the misfortune, forwarded to Lloyd's by Captain Simpson, with a statement that the only person saved,

name unknown, might be heard of at the King's Head Inn, —— Street, Liverpool.

"This tells me no more than I knew before," thought the doctor, throwing down the paper; "however, as my patient can now speak, I shall ascertain his name to-morrow, so I sha'n't be kept much longer in suspense as to who he is. I hope it may turn out that he is somebody of distinction, for there is a satisfaction independently of all emolument, in having a patient whose position and connexions give a certain importance to his medical adviser, and extends his reputation. When people say, 'the Honourable Mr. So-and-so, or, better still, my Lord So-and-so, was most successfully treated by Dr. Wellstead, of Liverpool, a remarkably clever man,' the remarkably clever man soon grows into the celebrated Dr. Wellstead, his fame extends, he becomes known in the metropolis, and he is thrown in fortune's way! Yes, yes, I hope my patient may prove to be somebody of distinction, and I am very much inclined to think he is, from the simplicity of his manner; for I have always remarked that persons of high birth and station are ever the most unaffected in their demeanour and manner." An opinion in which we heartily concur.

The apothecary's assistant having been dismissed, Fitz-Mordant was left alone with his

nurse, who, seated at a little distance from his bed, but where she could see him, took out from a tidy little work-basket some strips of cambric, and, putting on her spectacles, began plying her fingers with a nimbleness and precision that proved she was an adept in the feminine art of needlework. Fitz-Mordant looked at her, and found that there was something soothing and calm in the picture of repose she presented. She was a woman who still retained the remains of beauty. Her features well formed, her complexion fair and rather pale, her eyes dark and with an extremely benevolent expression, and her own silvery grey hair parted on a forehead that indicated more intellect than generally falls to persons of her class. Her dress was black, with a white and nicely-plaited cap with black ribbons, and a kerchief and apron of irreproachable whiteness. Her hands, somewhat attenuated, were well-shaped and scrupulously clean. She, from time to time, cast an anxious glance at Fitz-Mordant; and, encountering his eyes, expressed a hope that her occupation did not disturb him?"

"Not at all" was the reply. "On the contrary, it is pleasant to see how actively, yet noiselessly, you get through your task."

"I have been so long accustomed, sir, to work and read in a sick-room, that I can do

both without being heard; but sometimes, when a lady or gentleman is at all nervous, the sight of the movement of my hand may be disagreeable."

"I hope that, during my delirium, I was not very troublesome to you?"

"Very little so, indeed, sir. But I am truly glad to see you quite come to yourself again. With youth, and a fine constitution, one soon recovers one's strength; and as you, sir, have both, I trust you will very shortly be quite restored to your usual state."

"You are fond of needle-work?"

"Yes, sir; it makes time pass, and prevents one indulging in sad thoughts. Reading and working are great aids in getting through the long hours in a sick-room, which is, to my mind, the place where time creeps on the slowest."

"You have had great experience of sick-rooms, I suppose?" said Fitz-Mordant, desirous to beguile time by conversing with his nurse.

"Yes, sir, a good deal. I have witnessed much suffering; enough, perhaps, to have hardened me, and yet, somehow or other, it has not, for I can't see my fellow-creatures suffer without feeling my heart moved. Ah! sir, we have all need of each other's pity."

"Very true. May I inquire your name?"

"It is Miller, sir."

"You must reflect with satisfaction, Mrs. Miller, on the relief you have often afforded to those confided to your care?"

"I have endeavoured to do my duty, sir, to the best of my ability, and have sometimes succeeded in rendering confinement less irksome to the sick; but many have been the cases in which all my endeavours have failed; for physical suffering, by exciting the nervous system, often makes a poor patient so unreasonable and impatient, that he resents every attempt to sooth or comfort him, and that makes one pity him still more."

"You are half a philosopher, Mrs. Miller."

"No, sir; all I try to be is a Christian."

"A sick-room is a good school."

"Every scene of trial, whether mental or bodily, may serve as a school, sir, if we but only applied our minds and hearts to learn."

"I firmly believe so, Mrs. Miller. You have had, I hope, little affliction of your own to teach you pity for others?"

"Pardon me, sir, I have had my share, and I do verily think that my personal experience has better enabled me to feel for others. A person who has never seen those dear to her suffer, can never pity the sufferings of others so much as one who has watched for days and nights by the sick bed of a person dearer to her than life;

who has studied every change in the poor dear face of a loved one, every difference in the breathing. She who has experienced this trial can never more look with indifference on the sick, even though it be an utter stranger, and the poor helpless creature confided to her care becomes an object of such interest to her that, for the time, all her thoughts are centred in him."

"I fear that there are few nurses like *you*, Mrs. Miller."

"I hope, sir, there are many. But, when they fail, it is because they are not fitted for the employment. Every one, sir, should be educated for the part he has to fill in life; or, if not calculated for it, should have at least a vocation for it, which soon fits a person for the calling. A sprightly, bustling woman, who dislikes confinement, who can do nothing quietly, and who is fond of the creature comforts, will never make a good nurse for the sick; yet, when other means of earning a subsistence fail, such a woman, or her unreflecting friends, will think she may become a sick-nurse, and she will attempt the task, which requires a totally different person to fulfil it."

"Indeed it does, Mrs. Miller."

"There is a great, a serious responsibility attached to the duties of a nurse for the sick,

and, without a full consciousness of it, these duties will seldom be well-performed. I've often looked on a fellow-creature, sir, lying, as it were, on the verge of eternity, into which the slightest neglect, or imprudence, might hurl him. I've thought how the happiness of many fond hearts might be bound up with the life of that poor unconscious sufferer, and I've trembled for the grave responsibility I had incurred in becoming his nurse. Sleep might try in vain to weigh my eyelids down, when such thoughts filled my mind; my hand was ready, through the long night, to wipe the damp brow, to moisten the burning lips, to cover the body bathed in a profuse perspiration, the least check to which might occasion death; and, when the patient has been saved, I have thanked God that I, even I, obscure and of little worth, had been permitted to aid the recovery of a fellow-being."

"You have conceived your ministry precisely as the Sisters of Charity in France have done," replied Fitz-Mordant, greatly interested by the statement of Mrs. Miller.

"I have heard of those worthy women, sir, and often wished we had such a sisterhood in England."

"Please God," thought Fitz-Mordant, "I will establish such an institution, and you, my

good Mrs. Miller, shall be placed at the head of it."

Mrs. Miller during this conversation, occasionally, arose and glided noiselessly as a spirit through the chamber, refreshing the air by opening the door, so gently replacing a cool pillow for the heated one, beneath Fitz-Mordant's head, that he was scarcely sensible of his head being moved, and by various little changes rendering him so much more easy and comfortable, that he fell into a deep sleep while he was planning the establishment for the education of nurses for the sick, over which she was to preside, and awoke not until the grey dawn of morning had penetrated his chamber, when, opening his eyes, he beheld Mrs. Miller seated at her post, her head resting on her hand, and her eyes fixed on his face.

"I feel so refreshed, so well, my kind nurse," said Fitz-Mordant.

"God be thanked, sir!" was the reply. "Let me feel your hand! It is nice and cool. There is no more fever. Would you like a little breakfast? I can have some in a few minutes."

Fitz-Mordant greatly relished the offer, and Mrs. Miller hastened to prepare the repast. She glided to the adjoining chamber, where a fire had been kept up, and re-entered with a

large basin of water, some almond soap, and towels. Soon with gentle care she refreshed his face and hands as if he were a child, spread a snowy napkin over his bed, and, removing all the accessories for his ablution, again entered, bearing upon a tray covered with a nice white napkin, a plate of the most delicate and tempting bread and butter imaginable, and some tea, both of which Mordant pronounced to be the most delicious he had ever tasted, and to which he rendered ample justice, while his nurse looked on with such an expression of kindness and satisfaction in her benevolent countenance, as proved her delight at his amended health.

CHAPTER XIX.

"I THINK Fitz-Mordant might have made his final arrangements for the allowance he intends to make us," said Lady Mordant to her lord, the day that her son left London for Ireland.

"He is all kindness, all generosity," replied Lord Mordant, "and we may well rest satisfied that he will do all that is right; nay, more, all that is noble and generous."

"So *you* may think; but I confess I do not entertain so very high an opinion of him; and, even if I did, who can say what effect his wife's counsel may have on him? The notion of his marrying this Irish girl drives me mad! A mere nobody, without family, connexions, or fortune! He must be mean-spirited, and ignorant of what is due to his name and station, in making such a choice."

"For shame, Lady Mordant! How can you

be so ungrateful; I beg I may hear no more such reflections."

"He is *my* son as well as yours, Lord Mordant; and I have surely a right to express my sentiments about him. If he had acted as he ought to have done, he would instantly, after Lady Fitz-Mordant's death, have made over to you the estate inherited from Mr. Henniker, with the reversion to me. *I* was Mr. Henniker's relation, and consequently best entitled to his fortune."

"But, as *he* chose to leave it to our daughter-in-law, and that she bequeathed it to our son, we surely could have no claim on it: and we must confess that we have so grossly mismanaged our own fortune as to prove ourselves unfit for the management of another."

"Speak for yourself, Lord Mordant; speak for yourself. I have no mismanagement of which to accuse myself. I never had a fortune in my own power, and, if I had, I'm quite certain I should not have wasted it on the turf, among a set of cheats and blacklegs."

"I need no recrimination to remind me of my past folly. The generosity and indulgence I have experienced from my sons have awakened me to a keener sense of my infatuation than the strongest reproofs and reproaches could have done; but, while acknowledging my faults

—and they have been manifold—I am rather surprised to find you so oblivious and unrepentant of yours. How can you forget the hundreds, the thousands, I weekly furnished you with to pay your gaming debts?"

"And what were they in comparison with *your* losses on the turf, I should like to know? Mere drops of water in the ocean!"

"That may be; nevertheless, you were as culpable in squandering money away at play as I was in throwing it away on the turf; nay, more, as a woman, more culpable, as play in your sex is much more reprehensible than in ours."

"O! so you men say; but you will not get us to agree with you."

"For my part, I am not only repentant for my past follies, but fully determined never more to commit them."

"You are right, if they no longer amuse you. But, as cards amuse and interest me more than anything else, I have not the slightest notion of giving up play. How otherwise should I fill up the many hours I devote to it?"

"By the rational society of a few friends of your own age."

"Or, in other words, by the gossipping of a pack of twaddling old women and men. I

should die of *ennui*, were I to have recourse to such a mode of passing my time."

"Why not try reading; or, if your eyes, like mine, are too weak to read, have a person to read to you? I mean henceforth to adopt this resource myself."

"Reading always bored me, so I don't intend to try that experiment to kill time."

"Let us hope that in due season we shall both have new objects of interest. Our son will, I hope and trust, give us grand-children; and, I confess, I look forward with great pleasure to being surrounded by my children's children."

"What, do you intend to consider this Irish miss, whom our son is fool enough to marry, as your child?"

"I certainly will look on my son's wife as my daughter."

"I never could bear children. I always thought them a pack of disagreeable little animals, born only to plague their parents with their disgusting maladies. Never free from some infantile disorder, or another."

Lord Mordant sighed deeply, for every word uttered by his wife convinced him that she was irreclaimable, and served as reproaches to him for having taken no pains to wean her from the

love of play before it had become so rooted as to be now her ruling passion.

"I am going to the Duchess of Bellamont's this evening," said Lady Mordant, "and will have a card party at home on Friday night."

"I am sorry for it, for I foresee the result."

"I trust you will be mistaken in your anticipations, and that I shall win back some of the money I lately lost."

"If you are determined not to forsake play, why not play for small stakes? If you play merely to fill up the hours that might else be tedious, surely sixpences, or shillings, would do as well as gold."

"And, pray, who would play with me for such stakes? Why, people would think me insane to propose such a measure, and I should be forced to play with third or fourth rate persons."

"You could hardly find persons more selfish, or less forbearing, than the Duchess and her set. Remember how they dunned and harassed you when you were in their debt."

"As I will dun and harass them when they fall into mine."

"But, if your usual ill-luck pursues you, what are you to do?"

"It will be time enough to think of that when I have lost."

"Be assured our son, with all his generosity, and no one has more, will not provide you with money to gamble."

"He can hardly, I should think, allow his mother to be exposed."

Five days after this conversation, Lady Mordant entered her lord's sitting-room, her face pale and haggard, her eyes red and swollen—"I want you to lend me £500," said she, "for which I have the most pressing occasion. I have lost every night since I saw you, and, unless I pay the money lost last night, I shall be disgraced."

"I anticipated this."

"Pray spare me your reflections; my own are painful enough."

"I really cannot give you £500."

"Rather say you *will* not, for I am well aware Fitz-Mordant gave you money before he went away."

"My sense of what is due to him will not permit me to lavish the money he gave me in paying your play-debts, when, to-morrow or next day, a similar demand may follow this of to-day. If you would give me your word of honour to give up play, I would at once give you the sum you demand; but, without this pledge, I cannot—will not."

"Just like you, ever obstinate and self-

willed! If, as you said, you have indeed given up the turf, what can you want with the money Fitz-Mordant gave you?"

"Unfortunately, I have debts connected with it, which I *must* pay. I look on your case as utterly hopeless; for what can you expect when you are determined to go on playing, with the same ill-luck to which you have been for years a prey?"

"If you had a better head for calculation, you would comprehend that the longer and the more I had lost, the greater was the chance that my ill luck should change. One can neither go on losing nor winning for ever, so that, as I have been losing so long, I was justified in the belief that the time for winning back a portion of my money was at hand. And I still think so. I feel convinced of it, unless your absurd scruples prevent you from giving me the money I require."

While Lady Mordant was still speaking, Lord Fitz-Mordant's solicitor, Mr. Walker, pale as death, and quickly following on the heels of the servant who announced him, entered the room. Hardly allowing himself time for the usual salutations, he inquired if any letters had been received from Lord Fitz-Mordant since he had left town?

"None," replied Lord Mordant. "But, why

do you ask?" And he turned, in great alarm, to Mr. Walker, whose agitated countenance he anxiously gazed at.

"By which road was his lordship to proceed to Ireland, and where was he to embark?" inquired the speaker, rapidly.

"He was to go by Holyhead. But why these questions? Tell me, Walker, I entreat—I command you—tell me?" And the old man turned pale and trembled violently, as he seized hold of the arm of Mr. Walker.

"Be calm, my lord! I hope that it may be only a false alarm; but there was a report—it may be, and, probably is, wholly incorrect—that the packet from Holyhead to Dublin has been lost."

"Oh God! oh God! My son! my son!" exclaimed the agonized father, as he sank into a chair, speechless and horrified.

"Tell me the particulars of all this," said Lady Mordant, with a calmness and self-possession which struck the lawyer as being most strange and unnatural in a mother, and of an only son, too. He, however, repeated the particulars of the paragraph which announced the news; and she shook her head and observed that "she feared there was great cause of alarm." The date of the sailing of the packet from Holyhead perfectly accorded with the time it would

take Lord Fitz-Mordant to arrive there, and his mother remembered his saying he would go to Ireland by Holyhead.

"I will set off directly in search of intelligence of my son," said Lord Mordant, rising from his chair; but, such were his agitation and weakness, that he dropped into it again helpless as an infant. Mr. Walker really felt the deepest commiseration for the poor old man, and endeavoured to offer him some consolation by suggesting that there might still be grounds for hope. Lady Mordant beckoned him to approach her; and, retiring into the recess of the most distant window of the room, inquired, in a low tone of voice, whether her son had executed any will since he inherited the fortune of the late Lady Fitz-Mordant? Mr. Walker answered in the negative, at which her countenance brightened up, and she demanded with anxiety whether dying without a will, his father would not inherit all Lord Fitz-Mordant possessed?

"Undoubtedly," was the reply.

"You would certainly be the person my son would have employed to draw up his will," observed Lady Mordant; "so we may conclude that, as you received no instructions, no will exists."

"I think so, madam; for, as I possessed

Lord Fitz-Mordant's confidence, his lordship would not have employed any one else."

The unnatural mother's face betrayed the satisfaction she now felt so plainly, that Mr. Walker turned from her with irrepressible distaste, and, walking back to her lord, found him weeping and sobbing like a child.

"Really, Lord Mordant," said his wife, approaching the chair in which he reclined, "you must call up your courage to bear this trial, heavy as I must admit it is. Look at *me;* see how *I* bear it! It has pleased God to deprive us of our only son, but we must submit with resignation to his will."

She then beckoned Mr. Walker again to the other side of the room, and, whispering him, inquired "whether he knew the precise sum of money lodged in the funds, and in the hands of the banker of her late poor dear son?"

Mr. Walker could give no positive information, and the unfeeling woman desired that he would lose as little time as possible in making inquiries. She then returned to chide her lord for his grief. "You must not, Lord Mordant," said she, "injure your health by unavailing grief. Take example by *me*, and learn to conquer your feelings. Life, at the best, is but uncertain, and this sad event should be a warning to us all not to count on its duration. Our

poor son has died intestate, consequently you become his heir."

"Talk not to me of money," exclaimed the agonized father. "All the wealth in the world cannot give me back a moment's happiness again; cannot restore to me my son; my good, my generous, my noble son," and he wept aloud.

"We know that full well," observed Lady Mordant. "Nevertheless, your inheritance of this large fortune entails certain duties on you which must be fulfilled."

"Talk not to me of inheritance, of duties, but let me mourn undisturbed the loss of the best, the dearest son that ever father was blessed with;" and the old man hid his face and wept.

"The duty of which I speak is that of having your will immediately drawn and executed! At our time of life, and after so terrible a blow as the one that has befallen us, we cannot expect lengthened years. You should, therefore, instruct Mr. Walker to draw up your will; and, as we have no longer a child, *I* am the proper person to bequeath our son's fortune to, in case I should survive you."

"You will drive me mad, Lady Mordant, you will drive me mad. Have you no feeling, that you can thus think of the future, and urge me to dispose of the fortune of my dear boy while I am stunned by this blow?"

Lady Mordant shook her head, and whispered to Mr. Walker, "You see how weak my lord is! Poor man! I must act for him; so I request you will immediately have a will drawn up by which the fortune lately inherited by my son is to be devised to me, and, when ready, bring it here with proper witnesses to see it signed."

"Surely, madam, such a proceeding will be premature, to say the least," observed Mr. Walker.

"But, should Lord Mordant have any sudden attack in consequence of this heavy affliction, and be unable to execute his will, I should never forgive myself for not having caused it to be done in time; therefore, I desire that the will may be drawn without a moment's unnecessary delay."

Mr. Walker left the house, and called on the family physician to desire him to proceed at once to Lord Mordant—a precaution which probably averted the catastrophe Lady Mordant had so unfeelingly anticipated; for the doctor found the poor old nobleman so unwell that he had him instantly put to bed, and administered to him a composing draught, which soon produced a profound and refreshing slumber.

"At last," thought the unfeeling mother, "I shall possess wealth! Fitz-Mordant would, had

he lived, been a perpetual constraint on me. With his obsolete notions, he would have denied me aid, unless I gave up play; and his father, poor weak old man, would never have had courage to give me money against his son's sense of right. Fitz-Mordant dead, I can manage his father as easily as if he were a child; and, by making him sign a will bequeathing to me all his fortune, I shall be certain of affluence when left a widow, which, if I mistake not, I shall soon be. Fitz-Mordant, had he lived, would have been only a source of annoyance to me. He would have disgraced himself by marrying the Irish girl he had made up his mind to wed, and would have kept his father and me in leading-strings all our lives. Everything is for the best, and truly may I exclaim, 'It is an ill wind that blows nobody good!'"

Such were the feelings indulged by the unnatural mother and wife, when, in the evening, Mr. Walker again entered her presence.

"Have you brought the will?" inquired she eagerly. "I assure you there is no time to be lost."

"Oh! madam, I trust in God there will be no occasion for a will!" said Mr. Walker, his countenance bright with hope. "I have brought you good news."

Lady Mordant's face turned pale, and her brow became contracted as she gazed on him.

"Speak, speak!" cried she.

"I hope—I trust your son is saved. See here!" and he pointed to a paragraph in a newspaper in his hand.

"Read it, read it!" exclaimed she, trembling violently; and Mr. Walker, his own voice tremulous from emotion, read the statement written by the captain of the "Jeanny Deans," and sent to the newspaper.

"But why are we to suppose that the sole passenger saved should be Lord Fitz-Mordant?" inquired his heartless mother, her countenance again brightening up, and the tone of her voice sounding scornfully in the ears of her astonished and disgusted listener.

"I really cannot say," was his reply. "Nevertheless, I have a presentiment, a secret conviction, that the individual saved *is* Lord Fitz-Mordant."

"And I feel persuaded it is *not*," observed the lady.

"I am so certain of it, that I would instantly set sail for Liverpool," resumed Mr. Walker, "were it not that I must appear in court the day after to-morrow as a witness in a case of life and death; but the moment I have given my evidence I will start."

"I request you will call on me before you leave town," said the lady, considerably shaken in her belief of her son's death by the sanguine hope of the reverse entertained by Mr. Walker.

Lady Mordant slept little that night; she was agitated between hope and fear; hope that her son—her only son—was numbered with the dead, and fear that he might be the person saved. One moment she dwelt with delight on the notion of the wealth she would acquire by his death; the next, she trembled lest he should be alive, and all her brilliant prospects of inheritance defeated.

A letter by the post, two days after, in the handwriting of Lord Fitz-Mordant, and having the postmark "Liverpool," put an end to her barbarous hopes! She tore it open, and having read it, instantly determined to set out for Liverpool to enact the *rôle* of a fond mother, to ingratiate herself in the favour of her son. She communicated the joyful news of her son's safety so abruptly to Lord Mordant as nearly to bring on a fit, and then with all haste set out for Liverpool.

CHAPTER XX.

The doctor came the following day at an early hour to visit his patient, whom he found very much better than he had expected.

"I may now write to my friends, who must be in great anxiety about me," said Fitz-Mordant.

"Yes, certainly; a few lines, merely to assure them of your safety; or, perhaps, I could write for you, as the less exertion you make, for a day or two, the better."

"I feel quite equal to the task; in truth, I think myself quite well enough to leave Liverpool."

"No, no, my good sir; you must not, for some days, think of such a measure. It would be madness, and inevitably produce a relapse. I must order you some tonics, which, with a nutritious regimen, will restore your strength. Mrs. Miller, my patient may now have what-

ever food he feels disposed to take. His pulse is very satisfactory, and nothing but a weakness, very natural after so severe a brain fever, remains. I shall have the pleasure of looking in again towards evening. By-the-bye, sir, what name is to be entered in the apothecary's book, or, rather, on the labels for the medicines? It prevents mistakes."

"Mordant," was the reply.

When leaving the room, Dr. Wellstead made a sign to Mrs. Miller to follow him into the next one, and then inquired if she had discovered who the sick gentleman was?

"No, sir; he has not mentioned, and I, of course, did not take the liberty of inquiring."

"Have you any notion of his station in life, Mrs. Miller?"

"I should say, sir, that he certainly is a gentleman; there is no mistaking that."

"Yes, I agree with you. But there are gentlemen and gentlemen, Mrs. Miller; gentlemen of ancient descent and of modern; rich gentlemen and poor gentlemen, Mrs. Miller."

"Very true, sir; but in this case my opinion is that he is of ancient descent; he is so very polite and simple in his manners."

"A very good criterion to judge by; but I should like to know something more definite about my patient, so be particular to see to

whom his letter, or letters, are addressed; this may enable us to discover his family."

When the doctor paidh is next visit, he forgot not to inquire to whom his patient had directed his letter, and, when informed it was to the Earl of Mordant, he expressed great satisfaction.

"Yes, yes," observed he, "a relative of the earl, I have no doubt; perhaps a younger son, or a nephew. An eldest son he can't be, for I particularly noticed that there are two ciphers on his linen, and *no* coronet. By the way, has he ordered any linen?"

"Yes, sir, the day he came to himself, and I immediately sent to Mrs. Wiggins, who furnished some shirts for approval."

"Did he order them to be of fine linen?"

"No, sir; but, seeing how fine the linen he wore was, I desired that the finest should be sent."

"Yes," muttered Dr. Wellstead, *sotto voce*. "He must be somebody of distinction; I am very glad I happened to be called in."

Within as short a time as answers to his letters could arrive, the Countess of Mordant reached Liverpool, bringing a supply of clothes for her son, with the *valet-de-chambre* of the late Lord Fitz-Mordant, who had been retained in the establishment of his brother. The sight

of a handsome travelling carriage and four driven up to the door of the King's Arms, a third or fourth rate inn in the town, created considerable excitement, not only in the vicinity of the house, but in its interior. The bells were heard ringing on every side, the waiters ran about opening and shutting doors, the chamber-maids looked over the banisters and out of the windows, while the host himself advanced to open the door of the carriage, and the hostess stood within the hall door, courtesying, and ready to receive the lady in the coroneted carriage, who was volubly questioning her husband on the state of the invalid.

"How is Lord Fitz-Mordant?" inquired she.

"Really, my lady, I can't say."

"Can't say?" reiterated the Countess. "Surely he is no worse? Tell me at once how he is."

"I assure your ladyship that I hav'n't the honour of knowing his lordship, and therefore can't." But, before the man could finish his sentence, Lady Mordant interrupted him by saying,

"Have you or have you not a sick gentleman in the house?"

"Yes, certainly, your ladyship; but I was not aware that the gentleman was ——"

"How is he?" again interrupted the lady impatiently. "Let me out;" and, giving several

marks of perturbation while the steps were being let down, she rapidly descended, and, not deigning to notice the low courtsies of the hostess, hurried up stairs, saying, "Show me to his room! show me to his room!" She entered pocket-handkerchief in hand, and evidently prepared to enact a scene.

"Fitz-Mordant, my dear Fitz-Mordant, my son, my son!" exclaimed she, throwing herself on the bed on which he was reclining, and half stifling him with her embraces, "O! you know not, you never can know, what I have endured! Are you indeed better? What a miraculous escape from death—two escapes I may say. My joy at your safety is almost as overwhelming as was my grief when I believed you lost to me for ever." And Lady Mordant, no bad actress, enacted the *rôle* of a doting mother remarkably well; not, however, so well as to deceive her son, who saw through the mask she had assumed. "How is my father?" inquired he.

"Not well enough to accompany me. The first shock of the news of the loss of the packet was too much for him."

"I am sorry you left him."

"How could a mother stay away from her son, her only son? Ah! my dear Fitz-Mordant, you know not the heart of a mother."

The moment Mrs. Miller had ascertained the relation in which the newly-arrived lady stood to the sick gentleman, she withdrew to the next room, that she might not impose any constraint on them by her presence; but, little as she had seen of Lady Mordant's proceedings, she felt convinced that her ladyship had not been much accustomed to a sick-room, and possessed few, if any, of the qualities essential to form a companion in it.

"How comes it, my dear Fitz-Mordant, that I find you in a second or third-rate hotel? Why did you not go to the best?"

"Simply, because I was too ill to have any voice in the selection, for I was removed in a state of insensibility from the ship to this house; and, in gratitude, I must add that I have had no reason to regret it, for I have experienced attention and quiet, which might not have been the case in a more frequented hotel."

"But now that you are so much better, that all danger is over, you will, I hope, have no objection to be removed to the best hotel. This one appears unbearable."

"It is my intention to proceed to Ireland almost immediately, and for the short time I shall remain at Liverpool it would be fatiguing and unnecessary for me to remove, and would

be very ungrateful to the proprietors of this inn, who have been so attentive to me."

Lady Mordant looked annoyed, but endeavoured to conceal it. "I have travelled so rapidly," observed she, "that I have taken no refreshment whatever on the road—a circumstance which, now that my fears for you are, Heaven be thanked, over, begins to make itself felt; for I am so weak, and so terribly fatigued, that I feel ready to faint.

"Had you not better have some refreshment served? If you ring the bell, some can be ordered."

"The look of the house leads me to fear that its *cuisine* cannot be very *recherchée*, and mine is at best so very delicate an appetite, that bad cookery I never can touch."

"If you summon my kind nurse from the next room, I will intrust to her the commission of ordering you something nice. She is very intelligent, and may be depended on."

"My dear Fitz-Mordant, only fancy the sort of refreshment a *garde malade* would order? Weak chicken-broth and dry toast. This is all those of her craft know anything about."

"Let me try her as my *major domo* on this occasion, and I think you will have no occasion to complain."

Mrs. Miller answered the summons of the

bell, and Lord Fitz-Mordant confided to her the wants of his mother. "Remember, my good Mrs. Miller, that the repast required is *not* for an invalid, but for a person standing in need of nutrition."

"I have heard that Liverpool is celebrated for its turtle-soup. Order some to be served!" said Lady Mordant, with as much coolness as if she addressed her own man-cook at home, and without ever uttering a word of thanks or acknowledgment to the nurse of her son. "And send Félicité, my *femme-de-chambre*, to the door."

"How I wish she had not come!" thought Fitz-Mordant, quite put out of his way by the fidgettiness of his mother, who kept moving about the chamber, uttering complaints of its want of space and elegance, and wishing that he had been taken to the best hotel.

The gentle knock of Mademoiselle Félicité at the door of the chamber, drew her mistress into the corridor to join her on a visit of inspection to the bed-rooms, from which, after an absence of half an hour, she returned, declaring to her son that "they were so abominable, she felt certain that she could not sleep in any of them."

"Then had you not better send Beauregard

to engage a suite of rooms for you at some other hotel?"

"Yes, I should prefer that, if you will come with me."

"I really will not leave this house until I embark for Ireland. I am satisfied with its accommodation; but there is no sort of necessity for *your* remaining where you think you will not be comfortable."

"Félicité says there is a horrid smell of the sea in the rooms, and she has already consumed a whole box of pastilles, in the hope of perfuming one, and of rendering the room in which I am to dine less dreadful. How stupid and ignorant the man must be who had you brought to this inn! He really must be a savage."

"I owe my life, nevertheless, to his exertions, and never can forget his kindness."

"If he had not saved you, I dare say somebody else would. The rich Lord Fitz-Mordant would always find plenty of persons to exert themselves to save him, being well assured that they would be liberally rewarded.

"It would have been difficult for my preserver," replied Fitz-Mordant, much annoyed by his selfish mother's ill-founded remarks, "to divine that the poor half-drowned wretch whom he ordered his sailors to rescue from the jaws of death was a lord, or rich."

"But, when you *were* rescued, he must have soon discovered that you were no ordinary person."

"I believe he made no such discovery. My nobility, or wealth, could not be seen in an exhausted poor man, having no other clothes on than a shirt and drawers, and without a *sous*."

"He must have seen the coronet on your linen. That must have told him you were a nobleman."

"There happened to be no such indication of my station on my linen."

"Then, permit me to tell you, my dear Fitz-Mordant, that it was extremely wrong of you *not* to have a coronet on your *chemise*. Had there been one, you would never have been brought to this low vulgar inn, which is quite enough to make one ill."

"I am greatly annoyed that *you* should be exposed to its hardships on my account," observed Fitz-Mordant, coldly; "and, as I am now quite well, I hope you will return to London to-morrow, where my poor father's illness will require your presence."

"O! I dare say, he is now nearly well, if not quite so; for what are the feelings of fathers compared to those of a mother—the mother of an only son?"

Fitz-Mordant felt almost disposed to smile

at the pretension of his mother to such extreme sensibility and affection, while she could not bear with patience, even for a single moment, the want of the elegance and luxury to which she had been accustomed at home, without murmuring, although her son had been restored from the utmost danger to convalescence beneath the roof of the house that excited in her such disgust that she was anxious to leave it.

Mrs. Miller served Fitz-Mordant's repast with her accustomed tidiness, and he rendered due honour to it, and, for the first time since his recovery, drank a glass of pale wine to her health. When she had withdrawn, Lady Mordant exclaimed, "How can you, my dear Fitz-Mordant, suffer such an old-fashioned, prim, and formal creature about you? She would bring on an attack of nerves in me were I ill; and, even as it is, I assure you, *elle m'agace les nerfs horriblement.* I never could bear plain old women gliding about noiselessly like ghosts. Could you not tell her to change her style of dress, and make herself look less hideous?"

Fitz-Mordant was so provoked that he was on the point of expressing his dissatisfaction, when Monsieur Beauregard, the confidential servant of his mother, announced that her ladyship's dinner was served; and, to his great

pleasure, Fitz-Mordant saw his mother take her departure, and found himself alone with his kind and gentle nurse. "You look flushed, sir," said she, "let me feel your pulse. It is hurried. Indeed, you must be kept more quiet, or a relapse will take place."

"No wonder," thought Fitz-Mordant, "for the arrival of my mother has quite upset me. Oh, that the presence of a mother should produce such an effect!"

Nevertheless, so it was; and he felt not near so well as before her unlooked-for and unwelcome visit. She and her spoiled servants had completely deranged the hotel, its owners and domestics. No room was considered good enough—no food sufficiently dainty—for their use, as, following the example of their *exigeante* mistress, nothing that could be obtained was deemed worthy of their acceptance. The noise of hurried feet, the loud shutting of doors, and ceaseless vociferations, replaced the quiet which had reigned previously to the advent of Lady Mordant and suite; and many were the murmurs, "loud *and* deep," of the inhabitants of the hotel, as they expressed their hopes that they might never more be honoured by the patronage of nobility, if the present specimen of that genus of civilization might be taken as a fair sample of the whole class.

No sooner had Lady Mordant finished her repast than she returned to the room of her son, who, in compliance with the advice of Mrs. Miller, was courting the influence of a *siesta*. As her ladyship entered, the nurse waved her hand as a signal for silence, and, pointing to the bed, indicated that Lord Fitz-Mordant slumbered. But the lady advanced, heedless of the intimation, and, drawing back the curtain, exclaimed, "Fitz-Mordant! Fitz-Mordant! you really must not indulge in the bad habit of sleeping except at night. It will grow on you, and unfit you for society."

Fitz-Mordant opened his eyes, yawned, and heartily wished his mother anywhere else. "I felt the want of tranquillity and a little sleep," observed he, "for I've been accustomed to be so very quiet since my illness, that I can't yet bear noise, or excitement."

"Never was there such a dinner as they have given me in this wretched inn. I positively could not eat a single thing of the abominations they served up. Only fancy the savages not having a French cook! I feel positively ill from inanition."

"I do so much wish that you would go to another and better hotel. Here you will render yourself ill," and, he might have added, "me, too."

"I beg your ladyship's pardon," said Mrs. Miller, "but Lord Fitz-Mordant is by no means so well as he was in the early part of the day, and must be kept perfectly quiet."

"My son has assured me more than once, that he is so nearly well that he might travel; but it is the general practice of doctors and sick-nurses to try and keep their patients in their hands as long as they can, by persuading them they are ill when they have ceased to be so." And Lady Mordant looked contemptuously in Mrs. Miller's face.

At this moment, Dr. Wellstead entered. He had heard of the arrival of the Countess, and ascertained the rank of his patient. Elated with hope of the future, as well as present advantages, to be derived from the circumstance, he assumed as much suavity of manner as he thought consistent with his dignity, and, bowing low to the Countess, "hoped her ladyship had suffered no inconvenience from her long journey, and the painful occasion that led to it."

"Yes, I have suffered severely, and fear I shall not escape a serious illness. How could such a result be avoided, when a mother's feelings for an only son have been tortured as mine have been? But pray, doctor, how could you permit Lord Fitz-Mordant to remain in

such a wretched hotel as this? Why not have had him removed the moment you saw him? It could have been so easily managed while he was in a state of unconsciousness."

"Really, your ladyship, his lordship was so seriously, so dangerously ill, that the idea of removing him never once occurred to me."

"I am sure he never will get well while he remains in this odious house, and you should insist on his leaving it."

"Just at present, your ladyship, I could not sanction his lordship's being removed; and hitherto I have had no complaint whatever of his not being comfortable here."

"And so I have been extremely comfortable until the noise made by my mother's servants has disturbed me."

"*My* servants! Why, my dear Fitz-Mordant, they are the quietest, gentlest persons in the world. With my wretched nerves, I could keep no one near me who made the least noise."

"I am sorry to hear that your ladyship has such delicate nerves," observed Dr. Wellstead. "If you are suffering at present, permit me to prescribe a remedy I have found very efficacious with many ladies."

"I never take anything that is not prescribed by my own physician."

Dr. Wellstead now directed his attention to Lord Fitz-Mordant, and observed that he looked flushed and excited. Having felt his pulse, he became aware that he was not so well as when he saw him before, and he instantly administered a composing draught, and desired that *no one*, save Mrs. Miller, should remain in the room. Glad was Fitz-Mordant of this release from his restless lady-mother, who detained Dr. Wellstead in her sitting-room a full hour while she detailed the privations she was enduring from the badness of the hotel, and the sacrifices fond mothers were compelled to make for only sons.

CHAPTER XXI.

The arrival of Mr. Walker, Lord Fitz-Mordant's solicitor, the following day at Liverpool, bringing with him a banker's cheque-book and other necessaries for his client, greatly relieved the latter. From him he learned that Lord Mordant was doing well, and out of all danger; and so warmly did Mr. Walker speak of the grief and suffering of the poor old lord, while he believed his son was no more, that Fitz-Mordant's heart was touched, and he vowed to repay his parental affection by every means in his power. Not a word did Mr. Walker utter on the subject of Lady Mordant's regret for the supposed death of her son. His sense of delicacy prevented his exposing to him her unfeeling conduct on the occasion, but he was too truthful to make a false representation. His silence on this point was eloquent. Fitz-Mordant guessed the truth, but, though mortified, he was not surprised.

"I want to get my mother away from this," said he.

"I think I could suggest a means of accomplishing your desire," was the reply. "I saw Lady Mordant before I entered your room, and she informed me that she stands in great need of money."

"How is that possible? I left a very considerable sum with her the day I left town."

"Nevertheless, my lord, I know her ladyship to be without money at present. Indeed, she said she would have gone to another hotel here if she had money to pay her bill, but remained here that it might be included in yours."

"Let me have my cheque-book directly; and you will be so kind as to draw a cheque for £300, to which I will put my name. Procure cash for it, and I will make it a condition of her receiving it that she returns home to-day."

A good night's sleep had restored Fitz-Mordant to his previous state of convalescence. His nerves were strengthened, his spirits better. When his mother entered, she began a history of grievances—of the badness of her bed, the discomfort of her room, and the illness she felt coming on. So wholly was she occupied by self, that she forgot to inquire how her son was.

"Only think, mother, how dreadful it will be for you to be laid up in this bad inn!" said Fitz-Mordant; "let me advise you to return at once

to London, where you will be well taken care of by your physician, and where your cook can prepare whatever you wish to take."

"But how bring myself to leave you here, my dear Fitz-Mordant? A mother's feelings are too strong to allow her to leave her only son when he is ill, whatever sacrifice it may cost her."

"But I am now really so well that no cause for anxiety can remain, and you will oblige me by returning to my poor father."

"To be candid with you, my dear Fitz-Mordant, I came off so hurriedly, and was in such agitation, that I forgot to bring more money with me than was actually in my purse, and the journey down here has exhausted it."

"I can get over that difficulty, as I have already sent Mr. Walker to the bank here."

"If you could let me have £600, my dear Fitz-Mordant, you would greatly oblige me. I have occasion for that sum, which would set me quite at my ease."

Fitz-Mordant looked both surprised and displeased, for he had given her no inconsiderable sum before he left London, and her new demand convinced him that she had been gambling.

"Mother!" said he, "a son is placed in a very disagreeable position indeed, when he is compelled to express his disapproval of the conduct of a parent, and to withhold from her the means of pursuing a system so repugnant to his notions of right,

that he must think himself culpable in providing funds for it. I am well aware of your reprehensible passion for play—a passion that has already swallowed up large sums, and must leave you always in difficulties. I hold myself responsible for not wasting the fortune bequeathed me, and regret being obliged, by a sense of duty, to tell you that no portion of it shall henceforth be appropriated to the indulgence of your blameable propensity. I will, for this once, and *only* for this once, give you the sum you require; but, remember, it is for the *last* time, and let me beg of you to abandon a habit that can only end in embarrassment and disgrace, and which must alienate from you the affection of your husband and son, and the respect of society."

"It is hard, very hard!" said Lady Mordant, her face flushed, and her eyes sparkling with rage, "to be lectured by my son, as if I were a child."

"Would to heaven!" observed Fitz-Mordant, "that so painful a duty had not devolved on your son! You cannot feel it more deeply, more bitterly, than he does; but it rests with you, madam, to prevent a repetition of it. Give up play, and you will ever find me ready to administer to your comfort and happiness."

"Then you wish me to return to London at once?"

"Yes."

"I will go and order everything to be ready for

my departure; but remember, my dear Fitz-Mordant, I only go because you insist on it A mother's heart is always where her son is." And, having uttered this maternal phrase, the repetition of which always excited Fitz-Mordant's ire, from his knowledge of its falseness, Lady Mordant left the room, consoled for the reproof she had received from her son by the £600 which he had consented to bestow on her. "What fools women are to care for their children!" thought she. "There has my weak husband made himself positively ill by his grief for the supposed loss of this son, who makes as great a fuss about giving me £600 as if it were £6000! It would have been a good thing if he really had been drowned, for his father would have inherited all his fortune, and would be much more liberal to me than Fitz-Mordant ever will prove. I can now, however, pay my play-debts, and try my chance at cards again; and this is some remuneration for the trouble I had in coming here."

Fitz-Mordant felt as if a mountain had been removed from his breast when he heard the sound of the carriage-wheels of his mother drive from the door; nor were the host and hostess of the King's Arms and their servants less glad to see her depart, so much had she wearied them by her exactions, and humiliated them by her reproaches, during the short time she had remained.

"Tell my son," said the Countess to Mr. Walker, "that I have not paid my bill at the inn, nor given

any money to the servants; indeed they are so stupid and negligent that they merit little encouragement; so I hope he will not be profuse in his remuneration to them."

"Heartless woman!" thought Mr. Walker; "little does your son dream what an unnatural mother he has got. I saw how little you were affected by the report of his death; nay, more, that, believing his father would inherit his wealth, you were glad to be rid of him. Truly has it been said that the love of gaming hardens the heart, and destroys its affections and sympathies, when a mother can contemplate the death of her only son with satisfaction, in the hope of profiting by it in a pecuniary way!"

In a week from the time of Lady Mordant's departure from Liverpool, Lord Fitz-Mordant's health was sufficiently restored to enable him to embark for Dublin. He munificently rewarded the services of those to whose care and skill he was indebted during his illness; took a kind leave of his attentive nurse, Mrs. Miller, promising that she should be written to when he returned to England, and had founded the institution he had determined on establishing; and left so many grateful hearts and well-wishers at the King's Arms, from the owners down to the boots, that all agreed that such a lord as he was enough to make one think well of the whole aristocracy.

Fitz-Mordant induced Mr. Walker to accom-

pany him to Ireland, in order to be on the spot for the preparation of marriage settlements, should, as he ardently hoped, his suit for the hand of the fair Grace O'Neill be successful; and, as the vessel in which he had embarked bounded over the sea, its sails filled by a favourable wind, his heart beat high with hope and love. Before he left Liverpool, he addressed a grateful letter to Captain Simpson, of the Jeannie Deans, enclosing the £10 which that worthy seamen had so kindly advanced for him to Dr. Wellstead, when he little knew whether he had any chance of ever being repaid. Fitz-Mordant requested to know where a parcel would find the captain, having ordered for him a rich gold snuff-box with a suitable inscription, and cordially offered his services to him if he or any of his family should ever stand in need of them.

After a prosperous voyage, Lord Fitz-Mordant landed in Dublin, and thence proceeded to ——, being too impatient to behold the object of his affection to remain even a single day in the Irish capital. Mr. Walker had much difficulty in persuading him to stop to sleep on the road, so anxious was the lover to reach the spot which contained her he adored; and, as the carriage was driven up to the door of the Great Globe, on the evening of the second day of his journey, Fitz-Mordant sank back in the carriage, almost overcome by his feelings. Our old acquaintance Tim,

the waiter, was at the door of the Great Globe, napkin in hand, ready to receive the "company," as he termed it; and the host, as unchanged as if only a day had passed since Fitz-Mordant had last beheld him, occupied the hall. Tim gazed with a puzzled air on Fitz-Mordant. "Yes, it is —no it isn't," said he, as he stared at him. "Yes, by my soul, but it is his own self and no other! And mighty proud and glad I am to see you, Captain, in the land of the living, afther every one said you were lost in the packet. Oh, then, won't there be many a one glad to see you! Yes, faith, and that they will, for every one was sorry when we thought you were lost. Arragh, masther, look here—sure here's his honour, Captain Mordant, alive and hearty."

"Welcome, Captain Mordant! I am proud to see you at the Great Globe. Walk this way; take care of the step. You look a little pale, but the air of —— will soon bring the colour back to your cheeks again, to say nothing of the good fare you'll get at the Great Globe. What will you take?"

Fitz-Mordant had not sufficient self-command to inquire calmly how the Countess O'Neill and her grand-daughter were, although the question trembled on his lips, and set his heart beating rapidly, but he said, "I hope all my old friends at —— are well?" This, he hoped, would lead to the mention of those so dear to him.

"Faith and troth, some are well and some are ill—some married and some dead," replied Tim, as he marshalled Lord Fitz-Mordant, leaning on the arm of Mr. Walker, to ascend the stairs.

"Who is married?" inquired Fitz-Mordant.

"No less than two of the beauties of our town —Miss Biddy Phelan and Miss Dolly O'Reilly."

"And who is dead?" demanded Fitz-Mordant, turning paler than before, as with lips tremulous with emotion he made the inquiry.

"Sure, Father Magrath, the priest, is dead; and Sir Henry Travers that married Miss Fitzgerald, of Ballymacross Castle, likewise. Oh! and hadn't he a grand funeral! The like of it wasn't seen in these parts for many a year. And sure, though he's gone, there's another Sir Henry in his place, a real baronet, too, though he's not got a tooth in his head yet, seeing he's only three months ould."

Fitz-Mordant could master his feelings no longer, and inquired "how was the Countess O'Neill?"

"I believe the good ould lady is quite well; but the young lady"—

"What of her?" demanded Fitz-Mordant, trembling with anxiety.

"She was mighty ill. No one could tell what was the matter with her. One said she had a consumption, and another said it was a complaint of the heart, and so, as she got worse and worse, the doctors here could do her no good. The old

Countess was told to try change of air, so she took her off to England, to Devonshire, I think they said, and there they are; and we have not heard how the young lady is since they went."

Mordant sank into a chair, overcome by his feelings, so utterly wretched, that even Tim, the waiter, although not peculiarly sharp-sighted, perceived the sudden change, and ran off to procure a restorative. "Give us a bottle of the best wine," said he to the landlord. "Sure the Captain has got a strong weakness, and wants something to recover him." He hastened back with the wine and a glass, and pouring out some, raised it to the lips of Fitz-Mordant, who, having drunk it, felt a temporary relief. But the cruel disappointment of finding that his long journey had been made in vain, and the shock of learning the illness of his beloved, were too much in his weak state, and he retired to bed as soon as it was made ready for his reception, in a state of mind that baffled every attempt at consolation.

His terrified imagination pictured to him his adored Grace a prey to that most fearful malady, consumption; brought on, perhaps, by her affection for him! How bitterly did his heart now reproach him for having allowed a week, a day, to elapse after his accession to wealth, without writing to avow his love, and to claim its reward! Why had he permitted the vain forms of etiquette to prevent this? And now, now when every ob-

stacle to their union was removed, she was ill, perhaps dying, and he might never more behold her. He gave orders that everything should be prepared for his return to England at daybreak next morning. He would proceed to Devonshire with all possible speed, and might, perhaps, be so fortunate as to find her still alive. He rang his bell and sent for Mr. Walker, to whom he confided his desire to discover, if possible, to what part of Devonshire the Countess O'Neill had directed her course. Mr. Walker, guided by Tim the waiter, went to the house of the Countess, and, from the female servant left in charge of it, obtained the address left with her for forwarding any letters that might arrive while she was absent. Torquay was the place indicated, for which place the ladies had set out some weeks before; and, after having passed a wretched and almost sleepless night, Fitz-Mordant left the Great Globe at an early hour the following morning for Waterford, whence he meant to embark for Bristol, thence to hasten to Torquay.

CHAPTER XXII.

It is long since we left our fair heroine, the beautiful Grace O'Neill, struggling to conceal the passion she could not subdue. Hers was not a heart from which an impression once made could be easily effaced; and, although she called all her pride to her aid,—and she had a more than ordinary share of it in her nature,—she could not chase the image of Fitz-Mordant from the heart where it had enshrined itself. Even while vowing to banish him from her thoughts, he was as fondly remembered as ever; and there were moments when, angry with herself, she severely blamed her own weakness and pusillanimity in not conquering an attachment which was unauthorized by any avowal of reciprocity on his part. Poor Grace! never did a helpless bird, caught in a snare, make more desperate or unavailing efforts to free itself, than did she to release her heart from the bonds that held it. Her cheek grew pale, her eyes lost their wonted lustre, her lip its

coral dye, and her form its rounded symmetry, in this unnatural warfare between her love and pride.

The Countess O'Neill marked the change with alarm and grief. How did she accuse herself for her former blindness to the danger to which she was exposing her darling grand-daughter; how blame Fitz-Mordant for having won a heart "richer than all his tribe," without having the courage to brave their resentment, and lay his heart and hand at her precious Grace's feet! What was she to do in order to restore peace and health to her sweet Grace? Might not change of air and scene produce a salutary effect? *Here* everything reacalled Fitz-Mordant to the memory of her grand-daughter; and, aged as was the Countess, she still remembered how strong was the power of association in cases of affection, and how long, long years after she had lost those dear ones whom death had torn from her, how powerfully they were brought back to her by the sight of the places they had once occupied—the chairs in which they had often reclined. Grace never uttered a complaint, never referred to the name of Fitz-Mordant: but, if by any chance it was uttered in her presence, her changeful countenance betrayed the deep emotion it still occasioned. To her grandmother's inquiries about her health she answered that "she was not seriously ill. Only a little weak, or only a slight pain in the side, but nothing worth speaking of."

The Countess consulted the best physicians within reach. Each prescribed, but Grace derived no benefit from the medicines they ordered her; and, the alarm of her grandmother increasing, she determined on taking her to England: an undertaking that required no little courage in one of her advanced age, who had never previously left her own native land, and who had led so recluse a life. Grace felt that such an exertion would be a considerable trial to her grandmother's nerves, and, ever unselfish, was most unwilling that it should be risked; but, when the physician in whom the Countess had most confidence advised the measure, no remonstrance on her part could induce the Countess to abandon it.

It was at this period that Mrs. James Hunter wrote to request her mother to join her in England,—a request that occasioned Mrs. O'Flaherty mingled feelings of satisfaction and regret. To live with her daughter, whom she almost worshipped, and to behold her in the enjoyment of as much felicity as the old lady could picture to herself, would be indeed delightful; but, on the other hand, to leave ——, where she had passed so many years, where, ever since her daughter's marriage, she had become a personage of importance, was a trial not to be contemplated without certain feelings of dread. England, to Mrs. O'Flaherty, was as much a foreign land as Greece would be to most others. She had conceived strange notions

of its customs, habits, and natives, judging of them only from the wild young men in the different regiments which had been stationed at ——, and whom she had chanced to know, and, as to the most part of these she had been an object of ridicule, she entertained an undefinable dread of the whole nation. She read her daughter's letter to her faithful attendant, Judy, commenting on every line by her hopes and fears for the result of the proposed measure, Judy maintaining an air of considerable gravity all the while. "I'm afraid the family of my son-in-law might think me odd and strange. The English, you know, Judy, are always ready to find fault, and pick flaws in the Irish.

"Won't you have Mrs. James Hunter, your own daughter, to take your part? and well able she is, I'll be bound, to do so. Arn't you of an oulder and a greater family than all the English put together? and why should you, ma'am, be afraid of the best of 'em?"

"But here, Judy, every one knows me, and knows of what a fine ould stock I come; and I'm respected, and of late made much of, Judy; and I can't expect this in a foreign land."

"Ill tell you what I'd do, ma'am, in your place. I'd have your pedigree fresh drawn up, the tree painted anew, and the whole framed and glazed, and have it hung up in the room you are to sit in at your daughter's; and then those who go in there

will soon learn who you come from, and treat you with proper respect."

"Ah! Judy, sure a new-painted pedigree might lead 'em to think I was an upstart, and that it was the first ever belonging to the family. No; the old pedigree, though it is in tatters, will better prove the antiquity of my ancestors, just as the old and tattered colours of a regiment show how much service it has seen."

"Well, maybe you're right, ma'am; but I can't see why you should be at all afraid of the English. With your daughter to take your part with the gentry, and me to defend you among the servants, you'll be safe enough, I'll be bound. I haven't a tongue in my mouth for nothing; and I'd like to see the English man, woman, or child, that would dare to say black was the white of your eye when I'm to the fore."

"But to leave Ireland for ever—to leave the bones of my husband behind me—oh! Judy, it will go near to break my heart. Sure I always thought that when I died, I'd be laid by *his* side in the grave. Oh! oh!" And here Mrs. O'Flaherty wept aloud.

"Faith, and if you were, ma'am, he must be as dead as a door nail, or he'd make ye know he was near you. He wouldn't let you be quiet in your grave if he could help it."

"Ah, Judy! death makes great changes; and ever since *he* died—may the Heavens be his bed!

—I always forget how he used to treat me when he was alive."

"And you're right, ma'am; only, when you're breaking your heart crying about leaving *his* bones behind you, I just remind you what a knack he had of trying to break *your* bones when he was on earth."

"It was only his passion, Judy; nothing more, I assure you."

"Faith! ma'am, if a man was to beat me as the masther used to beat you, it wouldn't make much difference to me whether it was himself, or his passion did it."

"Well, I suppose everything is for the best; but I don't much like the notion of crossing the sea, Judy, since many a ship has been lost."

"And fifty times as many have crossed over safely! All you'll have to do, ma'am, and I'll do the same, will be to take a good strong tumbler or two of hot punch when you get into your berth, and you'll fall fast asleep in Ireland and awake in England, without knowing any more about the matter."

"It's a good notion, Judy, I must say, and I'll take your advice. And now I'll just go and see the Countess O'Neill and Miss Grace, and show 'em the letter. They're so friendly and kind to me, that I'll have a heavy heart when I leave 'em behind me in poor old Ireland."

"Put on your elegant Igny shawl, ma'am, and your beautiful bonnet, and let me wind up your fine goold watch, that I may fasten it to your side. It looks so grand to see that fine watch."

"But you always forget to wind it up, Judy."

"Sure it's no use wearing it out, by always keeping it going! It's enough to have it going when you wear it."

Judy attired her mistress in her fine shawl and bonnet, put a richly-embroidered cambric pocket-handkerchief in her reticule, with a purse containing gold and silver, "just to show people," as she said, "that there was no want of either in the house;" and reminded Mrs. O'Flaherty "to be sure to give every beggar she met a sixpence—it looked so grand and genteel:" saw the old lady walk forth, looked after her her until she was out of sight, and then closed the door, observing to herself, "She's a good ould soul, after all, if she wasn't so fond of crying about her husband, that made her so miserable while he was alive."

The kind letter which summoned Mrs. O'Flaherty to England was read over, with satisfaction, by the Countess, who was glad to find that the poor, weak woman was cared for by her daughter and son-in-law. Again did Mrs. O'Flaherty shed tears at the notion of leaving behind her the mortal remains of her departed husband, and still more at the idea of parting from her kind friends present, and again was she consoled by them

"Ah! it's a serious thing to go to sea, and to live in a foreign land," observed she.

"We must not consider the Sister Kingdom in that light," said the Countess O'Neill. "Since the union, you know, England, Ireland, and Scotland are one."

"So I've been told; but I think they're no more one than husband and wife are one, though people say so; for arn't they, like most husbands and wives, always quarrelling? How strange it will be for me to be the grandmother of an English child, won't it? Who'd have thought it? Well, well, no one knows what's to happen 'em in this world? If I thought I'd see you and Miss Grace in England 'twould be a great comfort to me, and would give me courage; but, when I think there's no one there that I ever saw before but my daughter and her husband, I feel quite shy and uncomfortable."

"I intend going to England very soon," replied the Countess O'Neill.

"Oh! come with me! That would be like new life to me. Then I shouldn't feel afraid of crossing the sea, or of facing the English."

"It will not be in my power to go so soon," replied the Countess.

"Oh! but sure I'll wait until you are ready."

"It would not be kind nor gracious to postpone your departure when it is pressed by your son-in-law. He, and your daughter, too, would have

reason to complain if you did not go to them with alacrity."

"I dare say you are right. Indeed, for the matter of that, you always are. You have a fine clear head of your own, and have ever given me the best advice. I wish you would do me a favour, and a great one I shall consider it, I assure you."

"Anything in my power."

"Sure, and it's entirely in your power, and in nobody else's. It is to accept some of the elegant silks, and satins, and velvets, sent to me from England, not one quarter of which have I had made up; and it's a pity taking 'em back to England. It's like sending back coals to Newcastle, as the saying is."

"You have asked the only thing I could refuse," replied the Countess O'Neill, her native *fierté* sending a heightened colour to her cheek. "But this is impossible."

Mrs. O'Flaherty, after paying a farewell visit to each of her friends,—and, since her accession to wealth, their number had greatly increased,—and having shed as many tears as her faithful Judy figuratively declared would float a man of war, left——, and attended by Judy and a man servant, pursued her journey to Waterford, where she was to embark for England.

We must not omit to state that, when she entered the carriage that was to bear her from her

home, it was surrounded by so dense a crowd of mendicants that no friend could approach it to bid her a last adieu. The various hues of the patched garments of these beggars, their elfin locks, their cunning faces, their outstretched hands, and their mingled blessings and entreaties for charity, uttered in the varied brogues of their different counties, offered a curious scene.

"And are you going from us, you jewel of the world?"

"What, will you lave your own people with the warm hearts to go to cowld England?"

"Are we never more to see your comely ould face?"

"Give us the last alms we'll ever get from your generous hand!"

"Sure, you'll never see us again."

"Oh! it's a bitter day for us to see you go!"

"May you cross the salt sea in safety, without ever a contrary wind to vex the ship that bears you from your own land!"

"May no harm come to you in the foreign land, where you'll never be loved as in your own!"

During these lamentations and prayers, Mrs. O'Flaherty wiped away her tears with one hand, while with the other she plentifully scattered showers of halfpence to the eager hands extended to receive them, until, the large stock provided for the occasion being exhausted, Judy, angered by the rapacity of the mendicants, put her head out

of the carriage window and addressed the crowd :— "And have ye no shame, no dacency in ye, that ye can't let the mistress part in pace? Not another farthing will ye get, ye pack of spalpeens, so ye may as well be off, and not bother the ould mistress any more."

This animated harangue produced the desired effect: the crowd opened, the postboy whipped on his horses through it, the beggars gave three cheers for the O'Flahertys, and the lady of that name sank back in the carriage, her tears streaming afresh as the cheers became fainter on her ear, and she murmured, amid sobs, "Oh! Judy, Judy, what a warm-hearted people! Such cheers as these will never be given for me in England."

"Don't despair of that, ma'am, if you give as many coppers for 'em as you have scattered just now," replied Judy.

"You think it was for the sake of the halfpence?" said Mrs. O'Flaherty, reproachfully.

"Faith, I've a strong notion of it, for I never heard any cheering for you when you were poor, ma'am."

"Because I wasn't leaving 'em, Judy. If I had been, they'd have been just as sorry for me as now."

"Well, ma'am, if it's any comfort to you to think so, I'll say nothing; but, if you knew them beggars as well as I do, you'd think differently. They're as cunning as foxes, as bould as brass, as

drunken as sows, and as ungrateful as the sea, which never was known to thank the clouds for all the rain they shower down on her."

"You wrong 'em, Judy, indeeed you do; they have warm hearts."

"Yes, ma'am, when their stomachs are filled with whisky, the sturdy, impudent rogues."

CHAPTER XXIII.

In a fortnight after the departure of Mrs. O'Flaherty, the Countess O'Neill and her granddaughter, attended by a female servant and the faithful Patrick O'Donohough, left ——. Arrived at Waterford, great was their surprise to receive a message from Mrs. O'Flaherty, stating that she was in the same hotel, and would pay them a visit; and in an hour after she made her appearance. "You're surprised to see me still on Irish ground," said she; "but the wind has not been favourable ever since I came here, so I was afraid to go to sea. I had such dreams, such warnings! The banshee of the O'Flahertys has been giving a *keenthehum* * every night since I came here, and has frightened me terribly. Judy says it's only the tin chimney-pot that wants oiling, and makes these noises; but I know the cry of the banshee too well to be mistaken. Then I dream every night of shipwrecks, and of trying to save my life

* The wail for the dead.

by swimming; but I can't keep above water, and I awake, half suffocated and almost dead with fright, and find my head under the bedclothes."

"We intend to sail by the next packet," said the Countess; "and I advise you to cross over at the same time."

"Well, if there's no wind I will."

"But, if there should be no wind, how could the vessel sail?"

"That's what Judy says; but I never can have the courage to go on board if there's any wind."

The persuasions of the Countess had, however, some effect; and Mrs. O'Flaherty had her passage secured in the mail-packet that was to leave; Judy declaring to the *femme-de-chambre* of the Countess that she was convinced her mistress never would have screwed up her courage to embark had the Countess not come to her aid.

Pale and trembling, Mrs. O'Flaherty accompanied the ladies on board the packet next morning, asking the captain and all around her whether the wind was fair, and how long it was likely to remain so—the latter question occasioning many smiles, and being replied to by the captain, "That it would continue fair just long enough to carry them across."

When, however, the vessel became in motion, the terror of Mrs. O'Flaherty was almost unbearable. "Let me out! let me out!" exclaimed she.

"Arragh, is it into the sea you want to go?" said Judy. "Sure we've left the land some time."

"Lord have mercy on our sinful souls!" prayed poor Mrs. O'Flaherty. "Oh, Judy! I feel every time the ship goes down between the waves as if my poor trembling heart sank down with it; and to think that there's only a board between us and that terrible sea. Oh, it's frightful! Do you hear how the waves dash against the side of the vessel, Judy?"

"Come down into the cabin, ma'am, and I'll put you into your berth, and then you'll not be half so alarmed."

"But will you stay with me, Judy, and not leave me for a single minute?"

"To be sure, I will."

Mrs. O'Flaherty, supported by Judy, moved towards the entrance of the cabin, when, casting her eyes on the sea, she beheld a buoy floating. "Oh! what's that, what's that?" exclaimed she, pointing to the object of her alarm.

"Only a buoy," replied a sailor.

"And won't you try to save him? Oh! the poor fellow, won't you save him?" said she. This question produced a general laugh, which drew from the angry Judy a remark that "it was a sin and a shame to leave a poor boy to be drowned."

Judy, aided by the male attendant, placed her mistress in a berth, and soon after administered to her a potion of such strength, that, before she

had swallowed it half an hour, she sank into a deep sleep, a fact that so perfectly satisfied Judy of its efficacy, that she prepared a similar dose, but of increased potency, for herself, and, having taken possession of the berth next to her mistress, resigned herself to a sleep from which she awoke not until the packet had reached its destined harbour.

Many and sad were the reflections of the Countess O'Neill as the vessel glided over the sea that had so many long years before deprived her of the husband she adored—that sea which had never yielded up those loved remains of the dead! Oh! might it not be possible that even now she was passing over his watery grave—over those sea-bleached bones which had once formed the frame of that noble, that glorious form! It seemed, after the lapse of long years, once more to stand before her dim eyes in all the pride of manly beauty, as when last beheld, when last pressed to her fond heart, little dreaming that in this world they should never more meet. The love stronger than death—the grief which, though calmed by time, had never died in her heart—seemed to revive with all its first agony and bitterness in her breast as the vessel swept over his unhallowed sepulchre. Oh! could she but wrest from its depths all that remained of him so wildly, so fondly loved, so well remembered, that the precious remains might repose

with her own in some consecrated grave, when God should call her hence, what a consolation would she deem it!

But the wish was vain; and, as the tears rolled down that pale and aged face, the long-made widow could only find a balm for her renewed grief in the faith that in a better world she should be re-united to the husband of her youth, to part no more. Time cannot change, age cannot chill, true love. The heart is not like an extinct volcano, which, heaving forth all its flames, retains no fire, no trace of its past existence, but the ashes left behind. No; the pure flame, once kindled, rests smouldering in the heart, ready to burst forth at the touch of memory, though the object that lit the fire may long have been numbered with the dead, and the person who retains it have long passed into the sere and yellow leaf of old age. Truly did her faithful servant, Patrick O'Donohough, sympathize in the renewed sorrow of the Countess O'Neill. He well divined her feelings by his own, for he had mourned and loved his lost master with almost a woman's grief; and, as he sat on deck and watched the treacherous element over which the ship glided, he wished he could be endowed with the power of divining the spot where the bones of his beloved master reposed, and of gathering them to place them in an earthly grave, over which his tears might fall.

Grace O'Neill's thoughts, too, were with the

dead. Often had she in her childhood heard of the catastrophe which had left her beloved grandmother, while yet in the prime of youth and beauty, a bereaved, a mourning widow, to wear away her life in blighted hope. She had heard *where* the fatal event had occurred, and judged the sad, the bitter feelings it must awaken in her venerated parent's breast, to pass over the sea that had engulphed the husband she doted on. But, although Grace thought of the dead with all the tenderness such a memory must evoke in a heart like hers, her mind occasionally wandered to the living—to Mordant—still so fondly loved. No longer would a sea roll between them, as of late! She would soon breathe the same air with him, although she must not hope to see him; or, perhaps, chance, sometimes kind, might give him to her sight! How she should like to behold him, herself unseen; to mark whether he was altered in appearance, whether the pangs of absence had wrought such change on *him* as it had on *her!* But no, this could not be; for, had *his* days been tedious and hopeless as hers, *his* nights as sleepless, he would, he *must* have sought her again, and avowed that love which she even now, much as appearances were against him, could not doubt he cherished for her in his secret heart.

Grace O'Neill had learned from Lady Fitzgerald that Mordant's brother had died childless, and that Mordant had succeeded him in his title. He was,

and had been for a considerable time, in a different position to his former one. He was now an only son. He was, consequently, no longer dependent, or ill provided with the goods of fortune, as heretofore. Yet this altered position, this certainty of a future inheritance, had wrought no change in his conduct towards her. Still did he keep apart and remain silent, not even by a letter to her grandmother revealing the change in his position! Did not this neglect bear the stamp of indifference? What other interpretation could be given to it? How often had she in the silence of night, when her head pressed a sleepless pillow, tortured her brain to find excuses for his conduct, but sought them in vain! Why, then, was she so foolish, so weak, so mean-spirited, as to continue to love one whose treatment of her she could not justify? For keenly did she feel that, although no vow of love had passed his lips, his eyes, his manner, the tones of his voice, and his half-smothered sighs, had revealed his secret as eloquently as words could have done? Poor Grace was not the first fair and gentle maiden who had asked herself a similar question, and, alas! with a result no more satisfactory; nor was she the first who, calling womanly pride to aid her in conquering an unrequited affection, felt that not even pride could drive her lover from her heart.

Grace had not heard of the death of Lady Fitz-Mordant, nor of the consequent accession of for-

tune to her brother-in-law; for Lady Fitzgerald (the only source whence she derived news of England) had been, at the period when intelligence of Lady Fitz-Mordant's death reached her, so wholly occupied in attending her daughter, Lady Travers, as to have neither time nor thought for aught else. Sir Henry Travers had pursued his erroneous system of confinement, starvation, and total abstinence from exercise, towards his wife, so as greatly to injure her health; and, fearful that, if not closely watched, she might break through his unreasonable regulations, he had given up taking air and exercise himself, in order to see them strictly carried into effect. The result was an attack of apoplexy, which, after three days' prostration of strength, and an unbroken state of unconsciousness, closed his mortal career, leaving his wife in a condition that gave serious apprehensions for her safety and that of the unborn infant, to whose advent all its foolish father's thoughts and aspirations had been directed.

Lady Fitzgerald and her husband hastened to their daughter. The former nursed her with tender and indefatigable care, while the latter arranged all the sad ceremonies for the interment of the Baronet. The long *séjour* of Lady Fitzgerald with her daughter prevented her from seeing the Countess O'Neill, or Grace, or from communicating to them the death of Lady Fitz-Mordant. Of Mrs. Mac Vigors they saw very

little; for, happy in the liberty accorded her by her husband of driving and riding about the country, that lady had become indifferent to her female friends at ——, and so seldom favoured them with a visit as to prevent them learning any English news from her.

From mournful reveries of the past, and gloomy forebodings of the future, the Countess O'Neill and her grand-daughter were disturbed by the announcement that they were entering the port of Bristol, and, in a few minutes after, the voice of Judy was heard loudly calling on her mistress. "Rouse up, ma'am, arragh, rouse up!" cried she; "shure here we are safe and sound in England. You must let me get you up, and make you a little bit dacent and tidy before we land. You've slept like a top all night, yes, faith, and like a humming-top, too, for you snored without stopping."

"Oh, Judy, I have such a headache! I'm sure you gave me the punch much too strong."

"Is it me, ma'am? Not I: I only gave it just strong enough to make you sleep the whole night through, without once awaking."

"Well, I must say, Judy, that it got me through the voyage wonderfully; but still the headache is very bad, and I feel, somehow or other, quite stupified—quite in a quandary, as a body might say. It's a queer feeling, Judy, to find one's self in a foreign land on awaking, when one went to sleep leaving one's own. Poor dear

Mr. O'Flaherty! what would *he* have said to it? Ah, Judy! I never thought I'd leave the land where his body rests. Oh, oh!" and Mrs. O'Flaherty began to weep.

"Faith, I don't know what he'd *say*," replied Judy, vexed at her mistress's tears, "but I think I can guess what he'd *do*. He'd welcome you to England very likely by a box on the face, if he happened to awake in bad humour, as he mostly did; and, instead of weeping and wailing, you ought to be thankful that you have no one to torment and worry you worse than ever a cat worried a poor unfortunate mouse."

"Ah! but he might have repented, Judy— he might have become quiet and reasonable."

"Arragh, is it him? Not while there was a drop of spirits to be had; of that you may be quite shure. Take my advice, ma'am, and let him rest quietly in his grave, and no more tears and moans for a man who made you cry and moan enough while he was alive to kill any woman."

"But I can't help it, Judy; I've got into the way of it."

"You see, ma'am, what a bad thing it is to fall into a bad habit. Now help yourself a bit, ma'am. Come here, stewardess, and help me to get my mistress out of that hencoop of a bed."

The stewardess assisted Judy to remove her mistress from the berth and to seat her on a sofa; and Judy, drawing a glass from one pocket

and some sugar from the other, poured a portion of the contents of a stone bottle, taken from her berth, on the sugar, and insisted on her mistress taking it.

"No, Judy, I'd rather not. 'Twill do me harm, I know it will. So early in the morning, too."

"Quite the contrary. 'Twill do you all the good in the world, so it will, and give you courage and strength to get on shore."

The potent stimulant was swallowed, and, as if to prove her confidence in its efficacy, Judy helped herself still more liberally than she had helped her mistress, and then arranged the tumbled cap and drapery of the old lady, put on her bonnet and cloak, and performed a similar ceremony for herself.

"Now, mind you take care of that hamper," said Judy to the man-servant; "I wouldn't lose it for a hundred pounds Never take your eyes off it. Let it be landed before anything else belonging to us."

"What is it, Judy?" inquired her mistress.

At that moment a custom-house officer, who had come on board, walked up and began examining the hamper. "What's in this hamper?" demanded he of the man-servant, who, in compliance with Judy's orders, kept close to it.

"What's that to you?" said Judy, vexed at what she considered the impertinent curiosity of

the man, and somewhat excited by the spirits she had swallowed.

"I'll let you know," replied he, "as soon as it's landed."

"It belongs to me," said Judy, boldly.

"I thought as much," was the rejoinder.

"Who cares what you thought?" observed Judy, with rising wrath.

"I'll make you care, I can tell you," answered the custom-house officer, angrily.

"I defy you, for a mean, low fellow, as you are, to want to affront an Irish *fe*male on her first coming to your dirty country."

At this crisis of the dispute, Patrick O'Donohough passed near, and noticing the terrified countenance of Mrs. O'Flaherty, and the irate one of Judy, paused to inquire the cause.

"Mr. Patrick," said Judy, "will you come and purtect me from this ignorant spalpeen, who wants to insult me?"

"Oh, Judy, be quiet, and don't call names?" whispered Mrs. O'Flaherty.

"What is the matter?" inquired Patrick.

"Nothing more than that this woman declares that this hamper and its contents are her property."

"And so they are, I'll take my oath of it. Shure it's only three dozen of smuggled potheen* I'm carrying over for the use of the mistress and

* Illicit whisky.

myself, well knowing that in this dirty country we couldn't, for love or money, get a drop of the right sort. This is the true potheen, the real mountain dew, that never saw the face of a gauger."

"You hear her," observed the custom-house officer; "you see she glories in defeating the law, in cheating the excise."

"Is it me, you spalpeen * of the world—you English modhaun,† you abominable liar; I'll scorn to do any such thing."

"There's some mistake, I'm sure there is," said Patrick, aware of the scrape Judy was getting herself into, and, looking at her and winking his eye to make her comprehend his meaning. "This hamper doesn't belong to you, I'm sure it doesn't."

"Oh, Mr. Patrick! are you, too, going to turn against me? It *does* belong to me, by the same token I paid three golden guineas for the potheen, and five shillings for the hamper and packing. I bought it from the smuggler's wife at Waterford, and I defy any one to prove the contrary."

"You see she's an old offender—a most hardened one," observed the custom-house officer.

Patrick recollected his Irish, and in that tongue rapidly acquainted his countrywoman of the scrape she had got into, and its grave consequences. The irascible Judy turned pale with terror, and, though she trembled violently, as-

* A puppy. † A fool.

sured the officer that the whole thing was a joke, just for a bit of fun. She'd take her oath she knew nothing about the hamper—never saw it before in all her life—did not know its contents, and only spoke of smuggled potheen to get a *rise* out of the gentleman."

"Yes, yes," said Patrick, "I knew it was all a mistake;" and, beckoning the custom-house officer away, he slipped a sovereign into his hand, and arranged with him that Judy was not to be molested.

"Oh! what a country this must be," said Judy, still pale and terrified; "when one can't bring over what one had bought and paid for honestly, without being in danger of being transported to Botany Bay, or hanged! To think that there I was, forced to deny being the owner of what I bought! Shure 'twas enough to drive one mad; and I'm shure, if it wasn't for Mr. Patrick, that terrible man would have settled me. Never again, go where I will, will I take a drop of liquor on board with me, except the little I put into my stomach before I embark, or that I can take in my pocket and finish before I land."

Mrs. O'Flaherty saw that something had gone wrong, but could not comprehend what. That it must be something grave she felt sure, by seeing that Judy, whose courage she never before knew to fail, was so alarmed; and she entreated Patrick to take charge of her and Judy, for she was afraid among strangers in a foreign land.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Countess O'Neill determined on passing a few days at Clifton, the salubrity of the air of which she had often heard praised, and she and her fair grand-daughter proceeded to that place to recover the fatigue of their voyage. Mrs. O'Flaherty declared her desire to adopt the same course, much against the wish of Judy, who felt herself insecure as long as she remained so near the custom-house officer, who might, as she intimated to Patrick, at any time give information against her, and have her transported, or hanged. Short as the voyage had been, the Countess O'Neill thought that Grace had derived benefit from it, and she herself, too, experienced an improvement. She was driven over the breezy downs in an open carriage with her grandmother every day, and, as she inhaled the pure air wafted from the sea, her spirits became cheered, the roses of health again re-visited her cheeks, and her eyes resumed a portion of their former lustre.

Finding her darling derive so much benefit from Clifton, her grandmother decided on remaining there for some time. The only drawback to their comfort was, that Mrs. O'Flaherty and her suite had taken up their abode in the same hotel; and the mistress was so foolish, and helpless, and the maid so very *Irish* in her ways, as to excite more attention than could be agreeable to the Countess, who, continually referred to for advice on the most trivial occasions, heartily wished Mrs. O'Flaherty would depart for the residence of her daughter, Mrs. James Hunter: a step, however, which that lady seemed by no means anxious to take. "I'll go next week," would be the answer to the oft-repeated remonstrances of her friend; or, "This is Friday; it wouldn't be lucky to travel on a Friday." Yet still was her departure postponed, and the comfort of the Countess and Grace broken in upon by her presence.

Judy had already conceived a strong prejudice against England and the English, and endeavoured to instil a similar sentiment into the mind of her weak mistress, who seldom had an opinion of her own. "Shure they must be the dirtiest people on the face of the earth," would Judy say, "to be everlastingly cleaning and scrubbing themselves, and everything about them. If you want to have a bit of chat with any of the housemaids, just to kill the time, they will go on trundling

their mops, or sweeping with their brushes, and be off before one has half finished one's story. They won't let even a poor spider alone, but brush away every cobweb without mercy. Then, they don't understand half what one says to 'em; and, if you try 'em with a joke, they grin in your face and say, 'That's a Hirish bull,' the poor ignorant creatures!"

The fact was that, unused to an idle life, Judy began to find time hang very heavily on her hands. She had no cronies to go and bestow her tediousness on; no friends of whom to excite the envy by the exhibition of her finery, and by the recapitulation of the fine clothes and gold of her mistress. Another circumstance, too, which might have considerably assisted to prejudice her against England was, the impossibility of finding any pure potheen in the place. Wanting this "cordial drop to make the bitter draught of life go down," a paradise would appear a desert to Judy; and she wondered that her mistress was not so much disgusted with England as she was.

After a fortnight's stay at Clifton, Mrs. O'Flaherty and *suite* set out for their final destination, to the great relief of the Countess O'Neill and Grace, who were heartily tired of the heavy burden the society of the old lady inflicted on them. Patrick had great difficulty in preventing Judy from making loud remonstrances and reclamations against the charges in the bill of her mistress,—

she declaring it was a downright sin and shame to submit to such robberies. "What! let 'em charge five shillings for a roast chicken?" said the enraged Judy, "when I could get one twice as good in dear ould Ireland for tenpence. Oh, the cheats?"

The waiters were in the habit of bringing the London papers to the sitting-room of the Countess O'Neill, and Grace generally read their contents aloud to her grandmother. One evening, while she was thus occupied, the following paragraph met her eye:—"We regret to state that Lord Mordant was among the passengers drowned in" ——. She uttered a faint shriek, the paper dropped from her hand, and she sank on the sofa in a state of insensibility.

The Countess, shocked and alarmed beyond measure, rang the bell, had her maid summoned, and a medical man sent for. Grace was removed to her chamber, and every means were tried to restore her suspended animation. It was long before the efforts used were crowned with success; but, when her consciousness returned, she became a prey to the deepest grief. She no longer, as hitherto, endeavoured to conceal her ill-fated attachment from her grandmother, but wept on her bosom in silent but poignant woe. And truly did the Countess sympathize in her sorrow, and by the utmost tenderness did she try to mitigate it. She uttered no vain words of con-

solation, for she felt the time was not yet come when any such could be listened to with patience, but she mingled her tears with those of the mourner; she pressed her fevered hand with fondness, she bathed her burning temples with cooling applications, and she smoothed her pillow in the hope that the exhaustion which follows deep affliction might induce sleep.

After some hours had elapsed, and Grace had grown more calm, she begged her grandmother to read the fatal announcement, and make her acquainted with all its details. Observing the hesitation and unwillingness of the Countess, who feared that her compliance with this request might occasion a fresh paroxysm of grief in her grand-daughter, Grace said, "It is better, I feel it is, that I should know all. My pride is over—it is dead with him. And now, dearest grandmother, that he is no more"—a torrent of tears streaming down her pale cheeks—"I may own that I loved him—oh, how fondly!—in spite of every effort to conquer my affection for him."

The newspaper was brought, and the poor old Countess, with a tremulous voice and eyes filled with tears, read the sad news. It stated that a packet from Holyhead to Dublin had been lost with all her crew and passengers, of whom only one person had been saved by the crew of a merchant vessel; and that it had been ascertained that Lord Mordant, who had lately succeeded his

brother in the title, had embarked in that packet. Now that she believed him lost to her for ever, Grace's love assumed a fervour, a tenderness, she attempted not to subdue. Pride no longer urged her to concealment, and she opened her whole heart, so long closed, to her fond parent—her truest, purest friend—and poured forth its treasured secret.

How did the Countess pity her darling as she listened to the narrative of her long suffering—her vain endeavours to subdue what she believed to be an unrequited passion! She encouraged her confidence, for she knew that it would lighten the load of grief that else might press too heavily on that youthful heart and delicate frame. She listened to the praises of Mordant uttered by Grace, who now could find only perfections in *him* so truly loved, so deeply mourned, and often added her own commendations. The sympathy of her grandmother soothed the grief it could not subdue in Grace. By degrees, it became less poignant. Resignation to the will of Heaven, of which her grandmother had given so admirable an example in her own case, took the place of the wild and uncontrollable sorrow that for the first weeks had overwhelmed Grace. She would entreat the Countess to relate to her all the sad details of her own bereavement long years before: would mingle her tears with those that never failed to bedew the face of her grandmother when she recalled

the heavy trial of the past; and the similarity of their afflictions awakened such an increase of affection in her heart for this dear, this revered parent, that she felt as if she had never loved her as she merited to be loved, until now.

Always docile and unselfish, Grace became still more so every day. She felt it to be her duty to struggle against sorrow, and to submit to the care necessary for the restoration of her shattered health, for the sake of that dear parent who had been so severely schooled in affliction, and who would be left desolate were she to sink into a premature grave. The thought of an early death is the most soothing to the youthful mind when visited by its first heavy sorrow. To rejoin the loved dead, whose departure from earth has clouded over all the sunshine of life, becomes the first wish—the first hope. And Grace could not have conquered this wish—this hope—nor have refrained from accelerating its fruition, had she not loved her grandmother so tenderly, and remembered how dreary would her existence be if left alone on earth. "I will try to live for her," thought Grace. "When she is called hence, there will be no longer any motive for me to bear the heavy load of life. I will then resign myself to the grief which will be so heightened by her loss, and trust in Heaven to be soon summoned to rejoin those too dear to be ever forgotten—ever less mourned than now."

The Countess O'Neill was one of the few on earth who could truly comprehend and appreciate a character like her grand-daughter's. It greatly resembled her own; and perhaps this family resemblance rendered it more intelligible to her. Traits of character, like features and forms, are often transmitted from parents to their offspring. When this moral and physical resemblance occurs in superior natures, the individuals are instinctively drawn closer to each other by a secret sympathy. This was the case with the Countess O'Neill and her grand-daughter; and when, to mitigate the grief of Grace in its first bitterness, the Countess revealed all she had herself endured, it was from a presentiment that it would produce a salutary effect. Nor was she disappointed. In the sympathy now more than ever established between them, the great difference in their ages was forgotten, and neither could in a companion of equal years have found a more perfect accordance in sentiment and opinions than in each other. Happy was it for both that this harmony existed, for it kept the heart of the aged woman still young, and that of the youthful one from sinking into despair.

After a sojourn of several weeks at Clifton, the Countess O'Neill and her grand-daughter proceeded to Devonshire, and took up their abode at Torquay. The beauty of the scenery, and the balmy air of this favoured spot, had an efficacious

effect on the health of both. Though pensive, Grace was resigned to her fate; and all who have ever experienced the gradual transition from bitter grief to resignation know that, although life can no longer offer prospects of happiness once held forth by the bright enchantress, Hope, the certainty that henceforth Destiny can inflict no blow like that which destroyed our anticipations keeps us free from the fears and anxiety which ever await those who have something to lose—something to tremble for. The calm of monotony—that tideless sea on which time floats on to eternity, and which ever follows the death of hope—is not without its benefit. The mind reposes, the heart beats languidly, the nerves are no longer strained to torture; the blood appears to stagnate in the veins, and the acute sense of suffering seems lost. This torpid condition is a relief after violent emotions have prostrated us. It is a repose like that of sleep after great moral and physical wretchedness; yet, strange to say, this unnatural state of apathy brought back health, by slow but sure degrees, to the stricken deer whose heart had been so deeply wounded. But with returning health the elasticity, the cheerfulness of spirits which appertain to youth, came not. If Grace no longer wept in agony as when she first heard of the death of Mordant, she was never seen to smile, but passed through the routine of her cheerless existence as one who neither felt

nor expected any pleasure or change in it. She would sit for hours by her grandmother, her eyes fixed on the sea, the monotony of its ebb and flow soothing her mind. But she would turn from it when, ruffled, it assumed a changed aspect, lest it might awaken fearful memories to disturb the torpor in which she was plunged.

Thus days and weeks, unmarked by change, rolled on unheeded. The Countess O'Neill declined making any acquaintances; so the solitude in which she and Grace found an opiate, if not a balm, for care, was as unbroken as they wished it to be. From Mrs. James Hunter they received a most cordial invitation to visit her in the country, written as soon after her *accouchement* as she was permitted to use her pen. Mrs. O'Flaherty, owing to her dilatoriness on her route, did not arrive at her daughter's until some weeks after Honor, to the inexpressible joy of her husband and his parents, had given birth to a son and heir —an event which ensured the old lady a most hearty welcome, and in the satisfaction of which her strange and incomprehensible delays on her journey were forgotten, or forgiven. The elegance and comfort of her daughter's house, the high estimation in which she was held, and the staid and matronly grace of looks and manners which had replaced the former levity and giddiness of Honor, astonished as much as they delighted the weak but fond mother. She found

herself, as the mother of Mrs. James Hunter and the grandmother of the infant heir to the house of Hunter, looked upon as a person of no little importance; and this homage, to which, poor woman, she had never been accustomed, highly flattered her. The apartments fitted up for her exclusive use she was never tired of admiring; and Judy, to whom she addressed her exclamations of rapture, admitted that she did not believe that in all Ireland, not even in Dublin Castle, the residence of the Lord and Lady Lieutenant, could there be found anything to equal these rooms. "Only it's a pity," added Judy, "that there's no convenient closets where one could put aside anything one didn't want all the world to see"—Judy's thoughts reverting to certain bottles which she had sense enough to know ought not to be exposed to the observation "of them spiteful English servants, who are always on the look-out for subjects to chatter about."

"And how friendly and cordial my son-in-law was!" said Mrs. O'Flaherty. "He's greatly improved, Judy, since he left Ireland. He begged me to make myself quite at home, and ask, without being shy, for everything I might want."

"Yes, ma'am; and I must say he was very purlite to me. 'How do ye do, Mrs. Judy?' says he. 'Pretty well, I thank you, sir,' says I; 'and hope you're the same. You've got as elegant a son and heir, sir, as I ever set my two eyes on, and I wish

you joy of him.' 'Thank you, Mrs. Judy,' says he, 'and I've got the best wife in the world. There's nothing like an Irish wife, Mrs. Judy.' Now, I call that very purlite, ma'am."

"True for you, Judy. Oh! if the people at home were just to see this place, and the elegance and grandeur of everything, how surprised they would be! And yet Honor seems to think nothing at all about it, but takes everything quite cool, just as if she had been used to nothing else all her life."

"And I'd advise you to do just the same, ma'am, and not give the good-for-nothing English servants the satisfaction of seeing you are astonished, or gratified. For my part, I'll keep them at a civil distance, and throw the grandeur and elegance of Ireland in their teeth whenever I speak to them."

"Did you see the lace cap and the lace trimming of the robe my grandson had on? I'm sure it must have cost £20, if it cost a farthing."

"Indeed I did, ma'am; and I'm sure the Lord Lieutenant's son never had a finer. Oh, what a pity it is I can't read and write! It vexes the heart of me to think of it; for if I could only write I'd send such accounts of this place as would make the people at home go half mad with envy and jealousy. Well, I must say Miss Honor was born with a silver spoon in her mouth, and well knew what she was about when she ran off with Mr. Hunter."

"Don't mention it, Judy; let it be forgotten. I don't like to think of it."

"It's only between ourselves, ma'am, that I'd mention it."

"When I looked at her, Judy, holding her infant in her arms, with her eyes fixed on its innocent face with such a look of love and happiness, it brought the tears into my eyes; and then Mr. James Hunter stooped down and kissed the dear little fellow so gently, as if he was afraid his lips might hurt it, and Honor glanced at her husband so kindly that it moved me, and I prayed in my heart that God would bless them both and their child."

"Amen!" said Judy; "and God *will* bless them, for I hear they are so good to the poor that there's not a cottage in all the neighbourhood from the warm hearts of which prayers don't rise up to Heaven for them, just as the blue smoke mounts up to the sky from the heat of the chimney."

CHAPTER XXV.

Lord Fitz-Mordant hastened on the wings of love to Devonshire, little dreaming, when passing through Bristol on his route, that the dear object of all his thoughts was within so short a distance of him, and that, in leaving that place, he was turning his back upon her. What would have been his feelings, could he but have known that she was at that very time mourning his supposed death in the deepest grief?

He reached Torquay as rapidly as four post-horses could transport him, and allowed not a moment to pass, after his arrival, without setting out in search of her he was so anxious to behold. He visited every hotel in person to inquire for the Countess O'Neill; then went to the libraries and reading-rooms, looked over all the names entered in the lists of arrivals and residences, as well as in the subscription-books; but no such name could he find. There was not a private abode that he did not ascertain the names of the occupants,

until, after ten days' incessant search, he could no longer hope to find any tidings of the Countess and her grand-daughter at Torquay. And now came the bitter thought, that the increasing illness of his adored Grace had compelled the Countess to stop on the route, or to take up her abode at some other part of Devonshire.

He went to Sidmouth, to Teignmouth, to Dawlish, and renewed his search in each of these places, but with an equal want of success. He then retraced his steps, stopping at every inn to inquire for those so anxiously sought for; but could gain no intelligence until, wearied and dispirited, he stopped at Bath for a day or two, to reflect on what he had best do next. Here his travelling companion, Mr. Walker, was compelled to leave him, business of an urgent nature recalling him to London; and, left to his own sad thoughts, Fitz-Mordant brooded over his disappointment, and fears for the health of Grace now increased to torture him. Whither was he to turn in search of her? How gain intelligence? At length it occurred to him to proceed to Bristol again, and there pursue his inquiries. It was there she would have, most probably, disembarked from Waterford, in order to abridge her journey to Devonshire. How did he now blame himself for not having, when he had landed there, made the inquiries he now meditated! He went to Bristol the following day, but could there gain no

intelligence of the travellers. At one of the inns at Bristol the proprietor, to whom he addressed his questions, informed him that few persons, and more particularly ladies, ever stopped in that town, preferring Clifton, the air of which was excellent, and the hotels good. Lord Fitz-Mordant lost not a moment in going to Clifton; and, after inquiring at two hotels for the Countess O'Neill, without learning any intelligence of her, he ascertained at the third that she and Miss O'Neill had remained there several weeks, having been detained by the illness of the young lady, and that they only left it a few days before, on their way to Devonshire. How throbbed the heart of Fitz-Mordant at this news!

"The young lady, then, was much better," said he, "that the Countess was able to travel?"

"Still very delicate, sir," replied the head-waiter of the hotel; "but certainly better on the whole."

"You are certain that they are gone to Torquay?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Patrick O'Donohough, their servant, informed me that the ladies were going there."

How many questions rose to the lips of Fitz-Mordant relative to Grace; but his tongue could not frame them, so great was his agitation. He longed to see the apartments occupied by the ladies, and to hear every particular connected with their *séjour* in the hotel. He would have given

more money than ever was offered to a physician to learn from the one called in to attend Grace at Clifton what his opinion was of her case; but he had not courage to seek him, lest the tidings he might hear should destroy the hope which now seemed to give him new life. No; he felt he dared not hear bad tiding now. He would hope the best, and hasten to judge for himself how far his hopes might be justified. He retraced his route to Torquay, inquiring at every place where he changed horses for those he was hastening to join, and had the happiness of being assured that the persons so dear to him had safely preceded him but a few days before. He urged the postillions to drive still faster, his impatience increasing as he approached near the goal of his hopes.

When descending a steep hill, more rapidly than was consistent with prudence, the pole of the carriage snapped in two, the horses became unmanageable, and the carriage was upset with great force down a rocky declivity by the road-side. Some labourers at work in a field near the spot, hastened to assist in disengaging the struggling horses from the carriage, which their violent plunging threatened every moment to hurl down a precipice near. The postillions were greatly hurt: the leg of one, and the arm of the other, being broken; and the *valet-de-chambre* of Lord Fitz-Mordant, who had received some severe contusions, was unable to move. It was some time

before Lord Fitz-Mordant himself could be extricated from the carriage, in which he was found to all appearance lifeless, with the blood fast flowing from a wound at the back of his head, and his hands severely cut. One of the labourers mounted a post-horse, and rode off to the next town, whence he returned as quickly as he could, bringing with him a surgeon, and two carriages to remove Lord Fitz-Mordant, his valet, and the postillions.

Luckily they were not more than four miles from Exeter when the accident occurred, so that the necessary aid was soon procured, and Lord Fitz-Mordant was conveyed there after the surgeon had staunched the deep wound in his head. That he had escaped death seemed little less than miraculous, from the height whence the carriage had fallen; and, until he was restored to consciousness, the surgeon feared concussion of the brain had taken place. This, however, was not the case; and, although one of his knees was so much injured that he could not move, and that his whole person was terribly bruised, no limb was fractured, and Mr. Hinton, the surgeon, hoped that, with perfect quiet and care, no serious result might be dreaded for his patient. But it was much easier to prescribe quiet than to obtain it in Lord Fitz-Mordant's case; for, although disabled from all bodily movement for the present, his mind was painfully active; and the influence

of mental anxiety over physical suffering is known to be ever most injurious.

Lord Fitz-Mordant, though not disposed to be superstitious, now became haunted by the notion that some fatality operated to prevent his union with his beloved Grace. This was the fourth time he had set out to meet her, and the second in which his life had been nearly forfeited in the endeavour. Now—now, when a few hours would have brought him to Torquay—at the very time when, with his heart filled with joyful anticipations of their meeting, after so many cruel disappointments, he had encountered a danger that menaced his life, and whose consequences would detain him from her days, if not weeks! He was well aware that his impatience and anxiety could only tend to retard his recovery; and, with this conviction, gladly would he have conquered the deep sense of annoyance that irritated his nerves and banished sleep from his pillow. But this he could not do; for he felt it would be as vain to bid the fever that was preying on his frame depart, as to chase away the cares and inquietude that harassed his mind.

But, in the midst of his sufferings, mental and bodily, Lord Fitz-Mordant forgot not those he had entailed on others in so impatiently urging the speed which had occasioned the disaster. His servant, who had been considerably injured, as well as the two luckless postillions, were placed

under the care of Mr. Hinton, and the wives of the latter were, by his orders, liberally supplied with money for the support of themselves and families, while their husbands were laid up. Lord Fitz-Mordant caused a letter to be written to Mrs. Miller, his former *garde malade*, at Liverpool, desiring her presence at Exeter, and, in as short a time as it was possible for her to obey the summons, she presented herself at the hotel where his lordship had taken up his abode. Under her charge, he became more patient. Her conversation amused and interested him, and she occasionally read aloud to him. He had given strict injunctions that no notice of his accident should be spread in the town, and as carefully concealed his rank and name, lest a paragraph in any of the papers should again bring him a visit from his lady-mother—a proof of maternal affection he particularly wished to decline.

With all Mr. Hinton's skill and Mrs. Miller's judicious care, several weeks had passed before Lord Fitz-Mordant could leave his room. To enable him to support his confinement more philosophically, he bethought him of despatching a messenger to Torquay, to ascertain whether the Countess O'Neill and her grand-daughter were still there, and to bring him their exact address. It was to Mrs. Miller that he confided the carrying out of this plan. She found a trustworthy messenger, recommended by the surgeon, taking

care that, while he was to make the desired inquiry, he was to be left in total ignorance of the name of him who instigated it. In due time, the messenger returned, bringing the satisfactory tidings that the Countess O'Neill and the young lady were still residing at Torquay—that the latter had been indisposed for some weeks on first arriving there, but was now convalescent, and that the term of the house they occupied would not expire for several weeks to come.

This pleasing intelligence had a very salutary effect on the invalid, by quieting his apprehensions about the health of his beloved, or of the Countess O'Neill leaving Torquay; and, although he would fain have set out for that place before Mr. Hinton thought such a step could be taken without danger, the representations of Mrs. Miller, in whose good sense he had the utmost confidence, induced him to remain at Exeter some weeks longer, when Mr. Hinton pronounced that he might now travel without any risk of a relapse. He left not the hotel where he had suffered so much, before he had generously provided for the two maimed postillions, and presented a handsome donation to his *valet-de-chambre*, who had now quite recovered from the effects of the injury he had sustained. From Mrs. Miller he would not consent to part, until he should present her to his future bride, and to the Countess O'Neill; so he took her on to Torquay, where he arrived in safety, taking care to be

driven to the hotel nearest to the abode occupied by the ladies. It was on a lovely evening, when the sun was setting, that his carriage was driven into the town; and, as it passed on, he gazed through the window, hoping that, in every slight female form that glided by, he might recognise the lovely girl who filled his whole heart and thoughts.

On entering the hotel, he had thought of writing a note to the Countess, to state his arrival, and to solicit permission to present himself at her residence; but then it occurred to him that he should be much better enabled to judge the real sentiments of Grace, by surprising her with his unexpected presence, than by coming after she was prepared to see him. He, therefore, determined on proceeding to the villa immediately. To this step, however, Mrs. Miller would not agree. He must have a light dinner after his journey, before she would permit him to leave the hotel; and she so pertinaciously adhered to this injunction that he found himself constrained to yield to it. This slight repast over, he entered a fly, which was driven to the gate of one of those pretty and picturesque villas, embosomed in trees, which abound in the immediate vicinity of Torquay. Having directed the driver of the fly to remain until he should return, Lord Fitz-Mordant entered by the wicket, and, without ringing the entrance-bell, with a beating heart walked towards the

house, keeping as much among the trees and flowering shrubs as he could, to avoid being seen.

The windows of the villa opened on a verandah, in front of which was a beautiful flower-garden, and, by the soft light diffused by an alabaster lamp suspended from the ceiling, Lord Fitz-Mordant could perceive, from the large laurustinas, beneath the shade of which he ensconced himself, the two ladies he sought, seated near the open window in easy-chairs. An open book was laid on a table near them, as if it had been lately laid down. The Countess's back was turned to Lord Fitz-Mordant, but the light of the lamp fell full on the lovely face of Grace. But how was that face changed! Pale as Parian marble, it too well denoted recent illness, while an expression of tender sadness lent it a new and touching charm. Never had he beheld Grace looking so lovely before; but he trembled as he marked the extreme delicacy of her face and person. The window being open, he could not only see, but hear them speak.

"It is, as you observed, dearest grandmother," said that dulcet and fondly-remembered voice, "a lovely night. So serene, so balmy. The air is perfumed with the breath of the flowers, and the distant murmur of the waves falls softly on the ear. On such heavenly nights, and in such calm and beautiful scenes, I love to think how he would have enjoyed them with us."

Fitz-Mordant heard every syllable of that low,

sweet voice, which thrilled to his very heart's chords; but he shook with emotion at the word *he*.

"I can comprehend all this, dearest," replied the Countess O'Neill; "for I, too, experience similar feelings."

"How survivors can ever banish the loved dead from their thoughts—from their conversation—I cannot understand," resumed Grace. "It is an infidelity to the departed that shocks me. How fortunate am I, my own precious mother, in having, in you, patient ears and a sympathizing heart, to which I can address every thought, every feeling, as if I only thought aloud. O, this *is* a great blessing! But *you* valued—*you* loved *him?*"

"Yes, darling, I esteemed him from the first."

"It appears to me that I never loved him so tenderly, so fondly, as since his death."

"O God!" murmured Fitz-Mordant, "and have I lived to hear this—to know that she can love so fondly, so devotedly, that death itself cannot conquer her affection. O! happy, happy lover, to be thus mourned! I envy you in the grave!"

"In death, the object we doted on cannot change," resumed Grace, "cannot incur our displeasure. He seems to belong exclusively to the one fond heart in which his memory is sustained. Had Mordant lived, he might have forgotten me."

"Never, never!" exclaimed the impassioned lover, aloud, forgetting all prudence in the excitement of his feelings; and then, overcome by the

violence of his emotions, he staggered forth from the place of his concealment, intending to throw himself at the feet of his adored, but had only taken a few steps when he fell senseless to the earth.

"His voice, his voice!" said Grace; "I come, my beloved, I come!" and she rushed from the room, across the verandah, into the garden, and, uttering a piercing shriek, flung herself on the prostrate form of Mordant, and fainted. The Countess rang the bell violently for assistance, and then hurried after her grand-daughter; and, the servants bringing lights to the garden, how great was her astonishment to find Grace lying senseless on the body of a man who appeared to be dead! When, however, his head was raised, and the light fell full on his face, the Countess recognised Fitz-Mordant, and she also nearly fainted. The usual restoratives were administered with success; Grace and her lover were brought into the drawing-room, and, after the lapse of half an hour, were sitting side by side, her hand clasped fondly in his, while they contemplated each other in joyful, yet tearful emotion.

CHAPTER XXVI.

It took many hours for Fitz-Mordant to explain all that had occurred since, with a sorrowful heart, he had last parted with his adored Grace; and, although he made as light as possible of his dangers "by flood and field," when going to solicit her hand, she could not hear the recapitulation without shuddering and grasping his arm in her terror. No longer did she attempt to conceal her love. He had heard her acknowledge its excess when she believed him numbered with the dead, and she deemed that it would be now unworthy of her to deny it. The Countess herself, overjoyed at the prospect of happiness so unexpectedly opened to her darling, was compelled to remind the lovers several times that they must separate for the night,—that they were both invalids, and must not risk their health when life now offered them such perfect felicity. Fitz-Mordant's fly was ordered to the door, and he was literally

driven out of the room by the Countess to take possession of it, after having engaged himself to breakfast at the villa at nine o'clock the following morning. Grace would go to see him as he drove away, though her grandmother tried to hold her back in her arms; and, when the sound of the receding wheels could no longer be heard, she flung her arms around the neck of the Countess, and wept tears of joy and thankfulness on her bosom. "To have him restored to me, as it were from the dead; to know how fondly he loved me from the first, how tortured his true heart was when I, unknowing his struggles, blamed him for coldness. Oh! it is almost too much happiness for a mortal to enjoy," sobbed the weeping girl.

The meeting next morning may be more easily imagined than described. Illness and sorrow had made considerable ravages on both the lovers, but the traces of their heavy trials, apparent in each, only served to endear them still more fondly to each other. How much had they to speak of the past, how much to plan for the future! Fitz-Mordant urged his suit so passionately, and her grandmother supported it so well, that Grace consented that an early day might be named for the solemnization of their nuptials. Mr. Walker was written to, to bring down the marriage settlements with as little delay as possible; and orders were sent to have one of the noble seats of Lord Fitz-Mordant prepared for the reception of his bride.

Fitz-Mordant having apprized his parents of his approaching marriage, they addressed the most polite and cordial letters to his intended wife, as also to the Countess O'Neill, expressive of their high satisfaction at the alliance. Lord Mordant's letter was dictated by his heart; for, touched by the generous conduct of his son, his first wish on earth was to see him happy; and, believing that his union with Miss O'Neill would accomplish this end, he warmly rejoiced at it. Lady Mordant's epistle had its source in the selfishness that had always characterized her actions. She was convinced that the surest mode of conciliating her son, and of securing a portion of his wealth for her own coffers, was to affect to be delighted at his marriage, and to adulate the object of his choice, although in her heart she strongly disapproved of his throwing himself away on an obscure Irish girl, as she termed Grace.

The happy Fitz-Mordant spent the whole day at the villa, walking through its beautiful grounds with his lovely Grace leaning on his arm. He had brought Mrs. Miller to see the Countess and her grand-daughter; and they, aware how much Fitz-Mordant owed to her care and skill, treated her with a kindness and consideration that filled her with pleasure. Fitz-Mordant' plan of founding an establishment for Sisters of Charity, to act as *gardes malades*, at the head of which Mrs. Miller was to be placed, greatly interested the Countess

O'Neill and Grace, who desired to take part in so praiseworthy a charity. How fleetly did time flow on with the happy occupants of the villa, and yet Fitz-Mordant, with all a lover's impatience, thought it advanced not rapidly enough, as he counted the hours until the arrival of that longed-for one which was for ever to unite his destiny with that of his adored Grace. He blamed the slowness of Mr. Walker in preparing the marriage settlement, although that gentleman declared that never before had a lawyer's work been so rapidly performed. He blamed the *modiste* in London intrusted to execute the *trousseau* for not having it ready in less than half the time ever allotted to the completion of a similar order; and he reproached the coachmaker for not having the new travelling-carriage completed, when that person believed himself entitled to the highest commendation for the rapidity with which he was getting it ready. But when were lovers ever known to be reasonable, much less patient?

Every day marked the progress that Grace and Fitz-Mordant were making towards renewed health. Her beautiful cheeks began to be tinted with the roses long strangers to them, her eyes resumed their wonted lustre, her lips their bright hue; while Fitz-Mordant, happier, O! how much happier than he had ever been in his life, no longer looked or felt like an invalid. The happiness of the Countess O'Neill, if of a more grave

and sober character than that of the lovers, was not less great. To see the destiny of her granddaughter, the sole tie that bound her to life, thus happily secured, removed all anxiety from her mind. She no longer dreaded that lovely and amiable girl's being left alone and unprotected on earth, when she should be snatched from her. The whole aim and end of her business in life, that of seeing her darling happily wedded, was now on the eve of being fulfilled; and she felt that, whenever it should please the Almighty to summon her home, she might close her eyes in peace with the certainty that her child's happiness was secure. And never did the most devoted son and daughter evince a greater, a warmer affection towards a parent, than did Grace and Fitz-Mordant towards her. The freshness of her feelings, the tenderness of her heart, and the charm of her conversation, prevented their ever finding her presence a constraint, and neither of them could have borne a protracted separation from one so dear to them. In vain did she propose to have a house of her own in their immediate neighbourhood. Lord Fitz-Mordant would not listen to such an arrangement, and Grace felt that, could anything have increased her affection for him, it would have been his respect and attachment to her grandmother, and his unfeigned desire that she should take up her abode with them. And now, every preparation being completed, the nup-

tial ceremony was solemnized at Torquay, and the happy pair set out for their seat in Kent, to be followed the next day by the Countess O'Neill and suite.

The Countess gave a seat in her carriage to Mrs. Miller, whose good sense and experience rendered her an agreeable companion: an arrangement very satisfactory to the bride, who was glad that her grandmother was in such safe hands. Never did lovers pronounce the sacred vows which bound them to each other for aye with more heartfelt devotion than did Grace O'Neill and Lord Fitz-Mordant. When the ceremony was over, they were pressed to the heart of the Countess O'Neill, who blessed them, while tears of gratitude filled her eyes. They felt that, however great had been their trials, they were amply repaid for them by the happiness now theirs; and their hearts overflowed with gratitude to the Giver of all good, for having vouchsafed it to them.

With what rapture did Fitz-Mordant welcome his bride to her new home, and how delighted was he to find that it suited her taste! Lady Fitz-Mordant would herself see that the suite of rooms prepared for her grandmother contained everything necessary for her comfort, and her enamoured husband *would* assist her in arranging the chambers. When, two days after their arrival at Auriol Abbey, they saw the carriage of the

Countess O'Neill driven up to the door, they hastened to embrace her with as much joy as if they had long been separated from her, Lord Fitz-Mordant quite as demonstrative of affection for her as his bride. Nor was the faithful Patrick O'Donohough overlooked by the happy pair. He was treated with a degree of consideration by them that elevated him in the eyes of all the establishment,—a distinction more prized by him than any other mark of favour they could have shown him.

When a week had elapsed, the Earl and Countess of Mordant arrived at Auriol Abbey, to make acquaintance with their new daughter. The old lord, when he embraced her, told her that, as her husband had been the best son that ever parent was blessed with, so, he doubted not, he would prove the best husband; and Lady Fitz-Mordant felt instantly disposed to love the speaker. The Countess of Mordant said, "That, now she saw Lady Fitz-Mordant, she could no longer wonder at the passion she had created in her son's breast, for no one could see her without loving her"—a compliment that pleased Grace much less than the simple words addressed to her by her husband's father.

Lord Mordant was so happy at the abbey, that its owners cordially pressed him to extend his visit. He was delighted with his dear daughter, as he called her, and took an immediate fancy to the Countess O'Neill. Not so did Lady Mordant,

who, finding she could not induce her to play piquet for large stakes, pronounced her, but only in secret to her lord, to be "a formal and dull Irishwoman, who knew nothing of fashionable life, or its usages." An observation to which he replied, "So much the better, so much the better."

To remain long in a house where cards were not played was a sacrifice to which Lady Mordant could not submit. So, on the third day of her visit, she took her departure, on the plea of engagements in London that could not be postponed, just recollecting before she went that she had by mistake locked up her purse in her dressing-box; and, as it was packed in her carriage, she must ask her son to lend her twenty-five pounds to pay for her post-horses. This sum being accorded to her, she departed, after taking leave of Lady Fitz-Mordant and the Countess O'Neill with the most flattering expressions of regard, and assuring her son that his wife was the most charming person she had ever seen, and did infinite honour to his choice. Unfortunately, Fitz-Mordant had so little faith in the sincerity of his mother, that he was not disposed to believe her exaggerated commendations of those so dear to him, but whose merits she was so little capable of appreciating; so he only bowed to her flattering speeches, and liked her still less than before for making them.

The departure of Lady Mordant was felt to be a relief by all the inhabitants of Auriol Abbey, and

by none more so than by her lord. Thoroughly *ennuyée* from the want of her nightly rubbers of whist, without which she felt time hang unbearably heavy on her hands, she had gone repeatedly to his room to express her disapprobation of Lady Fitz-Mordant and her grandmother; and, as he entirely disagreed with her in opinion, she had vented her anger in no measured terms on him. Now, free from this annoyance, he had not for many years felt so happy as at present. An object of interest and kindness to all around him, treated with the utmost affection by his son and daughter-in-law, he had no wish ungratified.

Letters of congratulation came pouring in on the happy pair. Among the first that reached Fitz-Mordant was one from his valued and faithful friend, Herbert Vernon, who announced that he was about to follow the good example set him by Fitz-Mordant, and to become a Benedict. "My *future*," wrote he, "captivated me by her resemblance to the peerless Grace; and is, next to her, the loveliest creature imaginable. But it is not alone in personal beauty that she resembles Lady Mordant: the likeness is borne out in mind and disposition, as I think you will admit when I shall have the happiness of making her known to you and your fair bride. I trust as close and unchanging a friendship may spring up between these two admirable women as has existed between you and me, my dear Fitz-Mordant, since our boyhood."

A letter from Mrs. James Hunter next followed. Every line of it proved that she was, indeed, "a wiser and a better woman;" so rational, so proper, and lady-like was every sentiment it contained. She spoke of her husband and child with unaffected tenderness, and of her mother with unfeigned affection. The letter made so favourable an impression on Lord and Lady Fitz-Mordant, that they looked forward with pleasure to meeting the writer again,—a wish they would never have indulged had she not have become, indeed, a different woman. Nor did Lady Fitzgerald and her daughters omit their congratulations. Lady Travers talked of coming to London next season for the recovery of her health and spirits, which, she alleged, required change of scene, and also for the advantage of her son; though of what advantage such a change of residence could be to a child not yet a year old, Lady Fitz-Mordant could not divine. "How fortunate you are to have married an Englishman!" wrote Mrs. Mac Vigors; "England is the only country to live in; for, being buried as I am in Ireland, is not living, it is only vegetating. My sister kindly invited me to accompany her to London, but Mr. Mac Vigors would not permit me. *She* is fortunate in being her own mistress,—a position, in my opinion, the most enviable on earth."

"Marriage has not improved her, I fear," observed the Countess O'Neill, as she returned the letter to Lady Fitz-Mordant.

"Our old friend, Honor, has acted a wiser part," replied Grace.

"Honor had always a good heart, my dear, and a good heart often rights a giddy head."

CHAPTER XXVII.

Lady Fitzgerald's note to the Countess O'Neill was as follows:—

"I congratulate you, my dearest friend, on the marriage of your charming grand-daughter. I always said she was formed to act a leading part in the *beau monde*. You have been more fortunate than other parents in securing a *grand parti* for the lovely girl you chaperoned; for, without taking any trouble whatever—without even moving from the retired precincts of an Irish country town until the health of your dear ward required it—you had managed to win for her a coronet, and with it a most amiable and distinguished nobleman. If you knew how many mothers, aunts, and sisters toil in vain through season after season to accomplish this end, half ruining themselves in giving dinners, balls, and *déjeúners dansants*, to say nothing of the expense in *toilettes* for the young ladies (no light matter, as I know by sad experience), you would, indeed, think yourself a most

fortunate person to have married your granddaughter so nobly. And now, after this *grand succès*, you will live in England, seeing Lady Fitz-Mordant filling a distinguished place; while other mothers are compelled to vegetate in a semi-barbarous country, where the last crime of a turbulent peasantry furnishes the topic of the day, instead of, as in dear London, the last *fête*, or the coming one. What a *triste* difference! The country—and, particularly, in Ireland, after one has been accustomed to pass the fashionable season in London—becomes insupportable. I feel this, and have repeatedly urged Sir Geoffrey to let me accompany him to town; but he won't hear of it, alleging that he only took his family there in the hope of getting his daughters married; and, having no more to dispose of, he sees no reason why he should take an old woman there. You know his *brusque* way. *A propos* of daughters, my daughter, Lady Travers, intends going to England next season. Happy woman! She is now her own mistress, and can go where she pleases. I had hoped that, knowing my desire to visit London, she would have invited me to accompany her; but, although I condescended to hint to her more than once how agreeable it would be to me, she has not proposed it. Ah! my dear Countess, Shakspeare was right when he wrote—

> 'How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
> To have a thankless child!'

"Have you seen anything of Mrs. James Hunter? I hear she has become a model of propriety. Who that knew her formerly could have anticipated such a change? She behaves admirably to her mother, who writes to me sometimes, and, to use her own phrase, asserts that she is 'as happy as the days are long.' My daughter, Mrs. Mac Vigors, like me, longs to go to England; but her husband will not consent to the measure. Although a good-tempered, hospitable man, he is so obstinate that nothing can induce him to change any of his plans; and it would be as easy to get him to take his wife to Botany Bay as to London. Poor thing! she and I often talk over our happy days in London when visits and shopping by day, and *soirées*, concerts,, and balls by night, made time fly so rapidly! My friends in England now never write to me. The Duchess of Bellemont never answered my two last letters. Such is the world, or, at least, the fashionable world! Do let me hear a little of what is doing in the *beau monde*. Ah! that French author was right who said that, though courtly scenes did not render people happy, the habit of mingling in them prevented their being happy elsewhere. Adieu, ma chère Comtesse! dites mille choses aimables pour moi à vôtre charmante fille, et à Milor Fitz-Mordant; et croyez-moi vôtre dévouée,

"M. Fitzgerald."

"Poor Lady Fitzgerald!" said the Countess O'Neill, laying down the letter, and removing her spectacles; "always pining for London and her fashionable friends, if friends they may be termed. Perhaps you were not aware, my dear Fitz-Mordant, that it was I who arranged your marriage with Grace?"

"But," exclaimed Lord Fitz-Mordant, "what a clever match-maker you must have been, when, up to this moment, I never even suspected that you possessed this rare talent! Did you, dearest Grace?"

"I always thought my grandmother could do anything she wished," replied Lady Fitz-Mordant; "and, if it be to *her* that I am indebted for being your wife, I shall not the less value the boon;" and she smiled archly.

"Sorceress!" said her Lord, "you well know it was *your own* charms, spells, and arts, that enslaved me. Your good grandmother and I were the innocent victims to your incantations. But, to be serious, be assured, my dear mother, (so he always styled the Countess O'Neill,) that, in attributing our marriage to your skill and tact as a matchmaker, poor Lady Fitzgerald believed she was paying you the greatest of all compliments; for, having so long vainly used every effort to arrive at this destination herself, she values you the more for having achieved it."

"She was always so kind and hospitable to us,

dearest grandmother, that I should like, if dear Fitz-Mordant had no objection, to ask her to spend a couple of months with us next season," said Lady Fitz-Mordant."

"I have not the least objection, dearest; *au contraire*, it will be discharging a debt of gratitude; for I never can forget the happy hours spent at Ballymacross Castle, where a certain little Irish sorceress, was beginning to practise her arts to steal my heart. Let the invitation be despatched in due time, that the prospect of accepting it may cheer poor Lady Fitzgerald's drooping spirits."

In the midst of his happiness—and never was that of mortal greater—Lord Fitz-Mordant did not forget his project of founding the institution for the instruction of *gardes malades*. He caused a house to be built suitable for the purpose, endowed it liberally, and placed Mrs. Miller at its head. Numerous were the sick who, before many years had passed, had cause to bless the name of him who had established this admirable institution, the advantages of which soon taught people to banish from sick chambers the uneducated and prejudiced old women who had previously usurped the places of nurses, rendering illness still more dangerous and unbearable by their ignorance and obstinacy.

* * * * *

A year has passed away, and Lord and Lady

Fitz-Mordant are the joyful parents of a beautiful boy, on whom Lord Mordant so fondly dotes, that he is never so happy as when playing with him. The visit of Lady Fitzgerald has been paid, and she has been heard to declare "that if Lord and Lady Fitz-Mordant were not too fond of home, and too much engrossed by each other, to live as much in the *beau monde* as *she* could desire, their house would be the most delightful in London."

Mr. and Mrs. James Hunter are come on a visit to Mr. and Mrs. Hunter, senior, expressly for the purpose of seeing the Countess O'Neill and Lord and Lady Fitz-Mordant. The meeting afforded the utmost satisfaction to all parties. Though prepared to find a great change for the better in Mrs. James, her old friends could never have anticipated the improvement effected in her; and her husband, Mr. James Hunter, has grown a quiet, rational, and gentlemanlike man, fondly attached to his wife and son; and Mrs. James Hunter has been transformed into a calm, dignified gentlewoman, who forms the happiness of her domestic circle, and has secured the esteem and respect of all who know her. Even her mother-in-law has learned to love her as a daughter, and has formed a sincere friendship for Mrs. O'Flaherty; and often has she been heard to say "that people were quite wrong in judging Irish ladies to be at all like the violent Irish women who engaged themselves in English kitchens and scul-

leries, and frightened cooks and housekeepers, as well as their employers, out of their lives."

Mr. Hunter, senior, has won the regard of all his daughter-in-law's old friends. He continues to consider her as the cause of his son's redemption from the follies of his youth, and loves her as if she were his own child. Of his grandson he is not a little proud; and he and his wife are well-disposed to spoil him, if permitted. But Mrs. James Hunter takes care this shall not be the case; though she manages the pair so judiciously that they are never offended at her interference.

Between Mrs. Herbert Vernon and Lady Fitz-Mordant a warm friendship has been established, to the great satisfaction of the husbands of both these ladies; and when, as often occurs, the Fitz-Mordants, Vernons, and Hunters meet at dinner, to enjoy what really may be considered a large family party, owing to the perfect freedom from ceremony, and the heartfelt cordiality that prevails, Lord Fitz-Mordant never omits to fill a bumper, and propose a toast which is pledged by his old friends and former brother soldiers with the most devout pleasure—to the memory of their

IRISH COUNTRY QUARTERS.

THE END.

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